The Road to Cathay

MERRIAM SHERWOOD
AND ELMER MANTZ

DECORATIONS BY WILLIAM SIEGEL

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THE ROAD TO CATHAY

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Here are told the stories of five great travelers: Friar John of Plano Carpini, Friar Odoric the Bohemian, William of Rubruquis, Ibn Batuta the Moor and Marco Polo of Venice, *together with their own descriptions of the marvels of Cathay, the wonders of Ind, the four rivers of Paradise and the islands of the South; and the tales that are in the Book of Sir John de Mandeville.*

THE ROAD TO CATHAY

By Merriam Sherwood *and* Elmer Mantz

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

I—The Wayfarers 1

How the Tartars spread terror through Europe, yet later welcomed Europeans at their courts—how the Pope sent Friar John of Plano Carpini on a mission to the Great Khan—how Friar William of Rubruquis traveled through Tartary with a message from Saint Louis, the King of France—how the father and the uncle of Marco Polo went out to the court of Kubla Khan on a venture of trade—how they returned to Venice and took Marco back to Cathay with them—of Marco's homecoming and later life—how Friar Odoric of Pordenone carried the Gospel into India and Cathay—of the globe trotter, Ibn Batuta the Moor—of Jean d'Outremeuse, who called himself "Sir John de Mandeville"—of Constantinople and the "Throne of Solomon."

II—The Moving City 15

Preparations for the journey through the steppes into Tartary—the first sight of the Tartars, their bad manners—kumiss, or fermented mare's milk—the moving tent city of the Tartars and how they traveled—how they looked; their dress; the Tartar ladies' headdress—of how the Tartars lived.

III—The Golden Horde 30

Of Comania with its tombs and heaps of bones—of the river Don—how the Tartars crossed rivers; the Volga —of the "Golden Horde," or tent of the Khan of the Kipchak Tartars—of Sarai, the new Tartar city—of Bolgara and the Land of Darkness—of dog sledges, "dumb trade" and dog-faced people—of the Parocitai who live on smell —of lambs in melons—of the city of Kwarizm and dried melons—of Bokhara, Samarkand and the church with a pillar that did not touch the ground.

IV—The Road to Karakorum 45

Of Lake Balkash and the "wind hill"—of the town of Bolat where there were German miners and metal

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CHAPTER PAGE

workers, slaves of the Tartars—of the stiff-legged men—of the gorge of devils in the Altai Mountains—of Tartar burial customs—of "salamander-wool," or asbestos—of Karakorum, the Mongol capital—of Master William Buchier, the Parisian goldsmith at the court of the Great Khan, and the mechanical tree that he made—of the Great Khan at his court—of the Urianghit who go on skis of polished bone; reindeer and the birds in the plain of Bargu—of the "Chinchin," who jump instead of walking.

V—The Road to Cambaluc 61

Of the ruined city of Balkh—of King Alexander and Roxana—of Taican and the mountains of salt—of cave-dwellers—of the Valley of the Corpses—of Badakshan and the mountain of rubies and the ladies of Badakshan—of the city of Yarkand, and the mountain of jade—of the town of Lop, the Gobi Desert, spirit voices and wandering lakes—of the city of Campichu and gigantic images of Buddha—of Sinju—of the terrible ways of the yak—of the musk-deer—of Prester John—of the wall of Gog and Magog—how Kubla Khan went hunting—of Shandu, or Xanadu, and the Great Khan's summer palace.

VI—Of the Great City of Cambaluc 88

Of the building of Cambaluc, or Pekin; Yenking and Taidu—of the bell tower there—of the suburbs where the foreign merchants lived and the great commerce of Cambaluc—of the palace of the Great Khan and the green mountain made of coal—of other planned cities and how they were built: Babylon, Alexandria, the round quarter of Bagdad and others.

VII—Cathayan Marvels 102

Of the land of Gog and Magog—of the highways of Cathay and the messenger-service—of coal, paper money and printing—of the philanthropies of Kubla Khan: measures against famine, farm relief, feeding and clothing the poor.

VIII—Of What Lay Southwest of Cambaluc . . . 118

Of the Luku Bridge—of Singanfu and the palace of Mangalai—of Sindafu and the bridge with houses—of how bamboos exploded in Thibet—of the "Forbidden City" of Lhassa and how the Buddhists would not shed the blood of animals.

CHAPTER PAGE

IX—What the Travelers Saw When They Went South from Cambaluc Along the Sea . . 131

Of the wanderings of the Hoang-Ho—of the great city of Yangchow and how men gave feasts there—of white ships that were fitted out as inns—how Chinese ships were built —how Marco and his father and uncle built a trébuchet to storm the city of Siangyangfu—of the city of Sinju and the great river Yang-tse—of Kwachow and the canal to Cambaluc—of rock islands in the Yang-tse-Kiang and the library on the Golden Isle—of the Land of Pigmans, who fought with cranes.

X—Of the Great Cities of Manzi 147

Of the city of Suchow with its 6,000 bridges and marble map—of the mighty city of Hangchow and its 12,000 bridges—of fire towers—of the royal palace in Hangchow —of the great commerce of Hangchow—of woolly hens —of merrymaking in Hangchow—of carriages and places of entertainment—of Chinese roads—of pleasure parties on the water—of dishes of lacquer.

XI—Of the Islands of the South 165

Of the city of Zayton, where ships set sail for Ceylon and India—how Chinese junks were built and sailed—of Zipangu, or Japan—of the Chinese compass which pointed south—of the kingdom of Champa, where there were elephants and enormous snails—how the fishes came up out of the sea—of the gold- and silver-paved palace of the King of Java—of precious stones that grew on roots—of spices—of the island of Sumatra and the sago—of the people with tails like dogs in the kingdom of Lambri—of the unicorn and the rhinoceros—how the polar star could not be seen in Sumatra, which proved that the earth is round—of the Necuveran Islands, where men live like beasts—of the Angamanain, or Andaman, Islands, where dwell dog-headed people, one-eyed giants, and men with no heads but with eyes in their shoulders and mouths in their chests, and other monstrous races.

XII—The Four Rivers of Paradise 178

Of the voyage to Ceylon—of the discovery of the trade winds—of the Mount of Adam—of wild geese with two heads—how the sea hangs on the clouds in Ceylon—of the House of Adam and of his footprint—how Kubla Khan obtained some of the hair and teeth of Adam and the bowl from which Adam ate—of gems which are the tears of Adam—of the Four Rivers of Paradise—of a mine worked

CHAPTER PAGE

by gigantic ants—of the commerce of Ceylon—of stitched Arabian boats—of a magnetic rock that pulled ships to it.

XIII—The Wonders of Ind 192

Of the pearl-fisheries of Maabar and boy-merchants—of St. Thomas the Apostle—of some curious Indian customs —of how horses were fed cooked cereal and meat—of the Rukh who fetched jewels out of a valley—how eggs were boiled in rivers because the sun was so hot—of the insects and birds of India—of the Mountain of Palombe and a miraculous spring that cured sickness and restored youth —of ox-worship—of the robber king of Eli—of pirates.

XIV—Of the Land of Persia 204

Of the city of Hormuz—how horses were shipped to India —of the towers called "wind-catchers"—of the night-riders of Camadi—of humped oxen and fat-tailed sheep —of the Tree of the Sun, called the Dry Tree—of the Old Man of the Mountain—of the city of Saba and the Magi of the East—of fire-worshipers—of the city of Conan, or Istakhr, that used to be Persepolis.

XV—Of the Lands Beyond Persia 221

Of the city of Bagdad and "baldachins"—how Bagdad was laid out—of the city of Mosul and muslin—of the Kurds—of the one-eyed cobbler who moved a mountain— of the city of Tauris, and its great commerce—of the jewelers' bazaar and the people of Tauris—of a mountain of salt—of Mount Ararat, on the top of which was Noah's Ark—of a Land of Darkness in the Kingdom of Abchaz— of an oil-spring on the shore of the Caspian—of the Iron Gate of Alexander—of Gog and Magog again—of the Amazons—how Genoese merchants carried their ships to the Caspian Sea.

XVI—Of the Lands Between the Black Sea and the Red 237

Of the city of Erzerum—of Trebizond and how it was built—of its commerce—of the Comneni, who ruled in Trebizond—of the monastery in a cavern—of the man followed by more than 3,000 partridges—of Lesser Armenia and the Lusignan princes—of the Castle of the Sparrow-hawk and the fairy lady, Melior—of the port of Layas —of Famagosta, on the island of Cyprus, and the Lusignan kings—of Aleppo and of Antioch the Golden—of Damascus—of Tyre—of the port of Acre—of Jerusalem, the center of the world—how the Travelers set sail for home.

Authors' Note 250

ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
Marco Polo returns to Venice	1
The traveler must bring rich gifts with him	15
Comania	30
Ruins of Bolgara	35
On the way to the Land of Darkness	37
The Vegetable Lamb	40
Samarkand	43
The Stiff-Legged People	45
The Gorge of the Devils	48
The Salamander	50
The Mechanical Tree	55
The Chinchin	59
A Chinese Nakkar	61
Cave Dwellers	63
An Indian Nakkar	65
The Ladies of Badakshan	67
The Ovis Poli	70
Kashgar	72
Spirit Voices	74
The great idols are lying down	77
The tame yaks are not so handsome	79
Map of Marco Polo's Journeys	Facing 82
The Great Khan always hunts on four elephants	84
There is another palace all of cane	85
A Gate in Taidu	90
The Great Wall of China	102
The Luku Bridge	118
Lhassa	122
The trebuchets hurled stones into the city	131
An island in the Yang-tse-Kiang	142
The Golden Isle	143

PAGE

Pygmies and Cranes Fighting 145
Mandeville's Travels . . . . . Facing 166
The Dog-Headed People 175
The Relics of Adam 178
The Trade Winds 181
A Fish Charmer 192
The Rukh 197
The Magic Spring 200
A Persian Wind-Catcher 206
The Trees of the Sun and the Moon 214
A Fortress Near the Iron Gate 221
Journeys of John Plano Carpini and William of Rubruquis Facing 234
The Dead City of Famagosta 237
Lady Melior 242
The Long Shadow of the Campanile 249

THE ROAD TO CATHAY

Marco Polo returns to Venice

THE ROAD TO CATHAY

CHAPTER I

THE WAYFARERS

Asia, as far back as history goes, has always been a land of mystery. Even to-day, when it is far easier than it ever was before to penetrate into the secrets of this half fabulous continent, the memory is still fresh of the Chinese as a nation shut in by an impenetrable wall. Wild monster-men in central Asia, the vast and treacherous wealth of Indian potentates, the forbidden city of Lhassa in high Thibet, the fairyland of Kashmir, land of magic, and a thousand such age-old visions —half legend and half truth—crowd into our minds at the mention of Asia.

India had been known to the Romans, and the sheer silks of China found their way to the Levant and were carried from

there to adorn the bodies of wealthy Roman ladies. Long before this Alexander the Great had led his victorious troops into India, whose wonders, in later centuries, became the setting for a legendary life of the great Macedonian king.

But Asia was still a land of mystery when, in the early Middle Ages, pilgrims and Crusaders looked wonderingly eastward from Constantinople or Jerusalem. Then, suddenly, about the middle of the thirteenth century, a door was opened and Europeans could pass through, even to the Outer Ocean, which washed the shores of Cathay, or China. The door was closed just as suddenly a century later; and when, after another two hundred years, travelers from the West were again able to visit the extreme Orient, the names of all the places had been changed by rulers of another race, and the Europeans did not know that they were standing where their elder compatriots had stood some two centuries before. They did not know that China was Cathay, and Pekin, Cambaluc.

This door to Asia was opened in a most strange and unexpected manner. In fact, it was just the contrary of what one would look for after the terrible catastrophe which had been threatening Europe. What this catastrophe was the medieval historian, Matthew Paris, reports in quaint and vivid language:

"In the year 1240 a detestable nation of Satan, to wit, the countless army of the Tartars, broke loose from its mountain-environed home, and piercing the solid rocks of the Caucasus, poured forth like devils from Tartarus. Swarming like locusts over the face of the earth, they have brought terrible devastation to the eastern parts of Europe, laying it waste with fire and carnage. After having passed through the land of the Saracens, they have razed cities, cut down forests, overthrown fortresses, pulled up vines, destroyed gardens, killed townspeople and peasants. If perchance they have spared any suppliants, they have forced them, reduced to the lowest condition of slavery, to fight in the foremost ranks against their own neighbors. They are inhuman and beastly, rather monsters

than men, thirsting for and drinking blood, tearing and devouring the flesh of dogs and men, dressed in oxhides, armed with plates of iron, short and stout, thickset, strong, invincible, indefatigable, their backs unprotected, their breasts covered with armor; drinking with delight the pure blood of their flocks, with strong, big horses, which eat branches and even trees, and which they have to mount by the help of three steps on account of the shortness of their thighs. They are without human laws, know no comforts, are more ferocious than lions or bears, have boats made of oxhides, which ten or twelve of them have in common; they are able to swim or to manage a boat, so that they can cross the largest and swiftest rivers without let or hindrance, drinking turbid or muddy water when blood fails them as a beverage. They have one-edged swords and daggers, are wonderful archers, and spare neither age, nor sex, nor condition. They wander about with their flocks and their wives, who are taught to fight like men. And so they came with the swiftness of lightning to the confines of Christendom, ravaging and slaughtering, striking every one with terror and incomparable horror."

The most of what Matthew says here is true. The Mongols, or Tartars—ever since Genghiz Khan had arisen at the beginning of the century to lead them out of farthest Asia on a path of fire and slaughter—had been overrunning the lands to the south and the west. They pushed their conquests into the kingdom of "Manzi," or southern China, and across Asia into eastern Europe. In the year 1241, under their leader Batu, Pest in Hungary fell, and Christendom gasped. Luckily, the tide stopped here; for the Great Khan died in far Cathay and Batu was called to court.

Yet it was these very Tartars, rude and barbarous though they were, who opened the door into Asia for a whole century. Their evil characteristics of cruelty, insolence and coarseness—which were, in part, due to their wild mode of living—were offset by a great adaptability to new surroundings, by an intelligent curiosity and by tolerance in religious matters. And

this was at a time when Mohammedans and Christians were waging their most bitter fights. The Mongols, growing rapidly civilized, welcomed to their courts merchants, missionaries and other travelers of all nations; and, since they ruled across the breadth of Asia, there were no barriers to impede the wayfarer. The Tartars whom the travelers found in Cathay were quite different in their habits from the wild hordes that had spread terror in Europe. The culture of the Chinese whom they had conquered had conquered them; until the splendor of their palaces and the efficiency of their government filled western visitors with admiration and wonder instead of with terror. It was not until the Mongol Empire fell before the Chinese, about the middle of the fourteenth century, that the wide-flung door was closed again and that Asia became once more a legendary land to the people of the West.

Fortunately, many of the European travelers who went out across Asia during the Mongol sway left accounts of their journeys. These accounts are well worth reading, for it happens that most of them have been found by recent explorers to be quite accurate. It is as interesting as it is unexpected to discover, for instance, that one may take one's "Marco Polo" as a guidebook in going from Persia to Pekin.

It is impossible to say who were the first Europeans to venture out to the extreme East during the Middle Ages. Probably they were merchants; but merchants are not likely to be literary men; in any event, we have no account of their travels. The only reason why we have a written story of the journey of that great merchant, Marco Polo, is that he was prevailed upon to dictate it to one who was interested.

Marco Polo was not the first European traveler to write a description of a journey to Cathay. But he was the first to give a general account of the lands which make up the continent of Asia: north to the Frozen Ocean, south to the tip of India and the Malay Archipelago, and from the Pacific or Outer Ocean to the Mediterranean. Other and earlier trav-

elers tell of the northern route to China, but do not speak of the south because they did not visit it. This is why Marco's story is of such particular interest. It is not, however, nearly so interesting a personal narrative as the accounts of some others. Such are the two friars, John of Plano Carpini and William of Rubruquis, who went out several years before Polo and who tell their experiences in a very vivid way. They can be read without very much explanation; whereas, unless Marco Polo is carefully studied and explained, one gets very little out of his dry and matter-of-fact description of what he saw. Marco Polo was a merchant and not a literary man. He was one—and a very important one—of many western merchants who established themselves in the Far East in his time; most of the others, however, are known to us only by brief mentions here and there.

In this book we shall compare what some half dozen of the travelers of Marco Polo's time said about Asia, so as to find out just what was known of that vast continent during the century when the Great Khans of the Tartars invited Europeans to their doors. We shall see what was true and what false in these reports, and we shall find that, in spite of superstition and fable, the old travelers were far more truthful than we should expect them to be.

The earliest of these accounts is that of Friar John of Plano Carpini, a Franciscan monk from the vicinity of Perugia in Italy. He started out in 1245 from Lyons, in France, where the Pope had called a council to deal with the question of stopping the Tartar invasion. One method of doing this was to send out envoys to discover whether the Tartars might not become converted to Christianity. Friar John was one of the envoys. He went, with letters from the Pope, and with another friar, Benedict the Pole, to act as interpreter, across Poland and Russia to the camp of the Khan of the Kipchak Tartars on the Volga. From there he was sent on to the court of the Great Khan, the lord of all the Tartars, near the city of Karakorum on the northwest edge of the Gobi Desert.

Two and a half years later the two friars were safely back in Lyons, with a very insolent letter to the Pope from the Great Khan Kuyuk for their pains, but with a most vivid story of their harrowing experiences among the half-civilized Mongols.

In 1253, eight years after Friar John set out on his uncomfortable journey, another Franciscan monk undertook a similar mission. This was William of Rubruquis, and he came from the village of Rubruck in French Flanders. Very little is known of the life of Friar William, but from the pages of his story, telling of his journey across the wastes of Tartary and back, shines out a very vivid and engaging personality. His account of his travels makes by far the best reading, as a human story, of all the travelers' tales of his time. It is not that he says much about himself directly, but his descriptions of what he saw and of what he did, and his very keen and sensible observations about Asiatic geography, language, and customs, show us a man of great intelligence, of remarkable tact, and of an alert and cheerful turn of mind. The only thing he tells us about his personal appearance is that the Tartars always gave him a good horse to ride—contrary to their usual way with strangers—"because of his great weight."

Friar William was not sent on his mission by the Pope but by the King of France, Louis IX, or Saint Louis. Yet his mission was not an official one, because King Louis, having had the unpleasant experience of being insulted by the Empress Regent of Tartary on the occasion of a previous embassy to the Far East, wished to preserve his dignity. Friar William had, however, a letter of recommendation from Louis, as well as a Bible, and Queen Margaret gave him a handsomely illuminated psalter, which the first Tartar prince on Friar William's path promptly appropriated.

The friar spent several years in thinking about his mission and in planning for it. He collected all the information he could about the Tartars from travelers who had visited them:

he may very well have discussed his proposed expedition with Friar John of Plano Carpini; at least, he was familiar with Friar John's account of his journey. Then he talked with merchants and others while he was in Constantinople and elsewhere in the Near East. Finally, he set out from Constantinople, with a companion and an interpreter and two or three servants. The interpreter, who was nicknamed "Homo Dei," or "Man of God," was about the worst interpreter the friar could have had: after William had been long enough among the Tartars to pick up a little knowledge of their language he discovered that Homo Dei, when he could not repeat the friar's words in Tartar or when he thought the friar was not saying quite the right thing, would say anything he pleased. Friar William grew almost afraid to so much as open his mouth.

The friar and his party sailed across the Black Sea to the Crimea, and from there followed more or less the same route across Asia, south of Siberia, as Friar John. But although his road was similar, Friar William's happier disposition made his journey a very different one from that of Plano Carpini. Friar William had a sense of humor; which rendered him more adaptable to hardships and to outlandish customs than the gloomy, carping Italian. Here, by way of illustration, is Friar William's description of his introduction to the terrible Batu:

"Then we were led into the middle of the tent, and they did not require us to make any reverence by bending the knee, as they are used to do of envoys. We stood before him the time to say: 'Miserere mei, Deus,' and all kept profound silence. He was seated on a long seat as broad as a couch, all gilded, and with three steps leading up to it, and a lady was beside him. . . . He looked at us intently, and we at him, and he seemed to me to be about the height of my lord John de Beaumont, may his soul rest in peace. And his face was all covered at that time with reddish spots. Finally he bid me speak, and our guide told us to bend the knee and speak. I

bent one knee as to a man, but he made sign to me to bend both, which I did, not wishing to dispute over it. Then he bid me speak, and I, thinking I was praying God, having both knees bent, began my speech by saying: 'Oh, lord, we pray God from whom proceed all good things, and who gave you these worldly goods, to give you hereafter celestial ones, for the former without the latter are vain.' And as he listened attentively, I added: 'You must know for certain that you shall not have the celestial goods unless you have been a Christian; for God saith: "He who shall have believed and have been baptized shall be saved, but he who shall not have believed shall be condemned."' At this he quietly smiled, and the other 'Moal' [or Tartars] began clapping their hands, laughing at us, and my interpreter stood dumfounded, and I had to reassure him that he be not afraid."

Friar William went on from Batu's camp to Karakorum, which was at this time the Great Khan's capital. There he passed a very pleasant time in the company of some interesting Europeans whom he found there, in discussing religion with Buddhist priests, in making notes of the peculiarities of Chinese and other writing, and in collecting exact particulars regarding the Tartars, which would be useful to his master, King Louis. Two years after starting on his mission he was back again in the Near East, at the island of Cyprus, where he had hoped to find King Louis. But the king had gone home to France, and the friar was not permitted to follow him there but had to remain in the Franciscan monastery at Acre. William was disappointed, for he was anxious to report his journey in person to the king, and instead he was obliged to write it. But in doing so he added a request that the king should intercede for him, so that he might go to France for a visit.

Probably King Louis granted his wish, for, a few years afterward, the brilliant scientist and monk, Roger Bacon, met Friar William in Paris to talk over what William had learned about the geography of Asia. So impressed was Bacon with

the traveler's observations that he included them in his most famous work, the "Opus majus."

This is all that is known of William of Rubruquis. If we knew as much about his life as we do about that of Marco Polo, we might find it just as extraordinary. And yet it would be hard indeed even to imagine a story more adventurous than the one lived by the great merchant. Marco's father, Nicolo Polo, and his uncle, Maffeo Polo, were prominent merchants in the great commercial city of Venice, which, with the rival Italian port of Genoa carried on most of the European trade with the Levant. In about the year 1260, when Marco was still a very small boy, his father and uncle were in Constantinople. They had another brother, also named Marco, who lived there and was in partnership with them. Nicolo and Maffeo decided to sail across the Black Sea to the city of Soldaia "on a venture of trade," and from there they went on, following their fortunes and without any fixed plan, to the court of the Kipchak Khan on the Volga. In the same unpremeditated manner, they finally reached the city of Bokhara, where they spent three years. One day, while they were there, they happened to meet some envoys who were on their way back to the court of the Great Khan Kubla in Cathay. These envoys persuaded the two brothers to accompany them to Kubla's court. Here they were very well received, for this Great Khan had never talked with Europeans and was eager to learn about their country. Kubla finally decided to send them back on a mission to the Pope with the request that they return with a hundred Christian missionaries to convert the Great Khan's subjects. When they reached Venice they found Marco grown to a lad of fifteen, and decided to take him back with them.

Thus, in 1271, after a delay of two years in Venice, the three Polos set out on their long journey, but without the missionaries. After many wanderings through Persia, Turkestan, and the lands beyond, they at last reached Kubla's court, in 1275. The Great Khan took a fancy to Marco, and,

during the many years of the young merchant's residence in China, entrusted him with important missions to various remote provinces of his empire, and even made him governor for three years of the great city of Yangchow. The three merchants seem to have had everything that heart could wish in their adopted land. They were honored by the emperor; they were piling up riches.

But there was a fly in the ointment: Kubla Khan was growing old, and they had reason to fear that they would not be so well treated by his successor. They were anxious to return home, but the emperor was attached to them and would not have permitted them to do so, if a fortunate occurrence had not forced him to. Kubla's grandnephew, the Khan of Persia, had lost his favorite wife and, following her dying wish, sent envoys to the Great Khan requesting a new wife from his dead wife's tribe in Mongolia. The Lady Kukachin was selected, and it was proposed to return by sea. The ambassadors, however, were afraid to do this without taking with them the experienced Venetian travelers; so Kubla reluctantly allowed them to go. In 1292 the party set sail from the harbor of Zayton in southern China, and, after a rather disastrous voyage, arrived in Persia, only to find that the bridegroom had died some years before. Lady Kukachin was married to the son of her late fiancé. Her Venetian escort proceeded on their way, reaching Venice probably in 1295, after an absence of twenty-four years.

The story is told of how they presented themselves, in worn and outlandish costumes, before their house in Venice, and of how nobody would recognize them until they gave a dinner to their relatives, whom they convinced of their identity by showing them that the old garments which they wore were filled with precious gems sewed into the seams—the wealth which they had gathered in Cathay!

The next thing we hear of Marco Polo took place three years later, when the Genoese fleet was attacking Venice, and Marco was among the seven thousand prisoners who

were taken off to Genoa. He was in prison only a few months; but it is to those few months that we owe the book of travels which gives the truest description of all Asia that has come down to us from the Middle Ages. For while he was in prison he became acquainted with another prisoner, a man name Rusticiano of Pisa, who wrote down from Marco's dictation the narrative of his travels. This is about the last we hear of Marco Polo, except that he made his will in 1324 and probably died shortly afterward. The tourist in Venice can still see a portion of his house. His fame, however, seems destined never to die; for the modern explorer can still take the old Venetian traveler as a guide through the perilous countries that will bring him at last to China.

The first friars who went out into Asia went timidly enough. They were feeling their way among a barbarous people. About fifty years later, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, things had changed. The Tartars were becoming more and more civilized. Christians were kindly looked upon, and the establishing of missions was no longer a dream. The Catholic Church sent bishops to the great cities of Cathay and India and founded monasteries there. To this period belongs Friar Odoric, the Bohemian, of Pordenone, in Italy, said to have belonged to the family of one of the members of the Bohemian garrison in this district. Odoric's travels covered a period of about twelve years—from 1318 to 1330. He went in leisurely fashion, in the exercise of his religious calling, through Persia to Hormuz, and then, in various stages, by sea to India, and around the coast to the great ports of China, finally reaching Cambaluc, or Pekin, the capital of the Mongol Empire. Here he stayed three years at the Christian mission, which was directed by another Italian monk, John of Montecorvino, Archbishop of Cambaluc.

Odoric finally returned home, where he died in 1331, probably worn out by the hardships of his long wanderings. He had had time, however, to tell his story to a brother Franciscan, who wrote it down. His memory was reverenced by

all the people of the countryside; for it was said that miracles were performed at his grave. A shrine was erected to him, and finally, four centuries after his death, he was beatified. His life was very different from that of Marco Polo, and he was successful in another way. His account, although less comprehensive than the merchant's, contains some very moving passages.

The four travelers of whom we have just been speaking have left stories which are alike in one important way: they are intended to be truthful, and, in every case where the writers are describing something which they actually saw, their descriptions are surprisingly accurate. They are usually careful to say, besides, what they saw and what they got at second hand. This is not the case with two other writers of about the same time; and yet their accounts tell us things of such interest that they cannot be passed by in a picture of what men thought of Asia in Marco Polo's day.

One of these writers was not a European at all, though he was from the West. He was the globe-trotter, Ibn Batuta, the Moor. Ibn Batuta, a Mohammedan, was born in Tangier in 1304. From the age of twenty-one, for twenty-eight years, he followed his restless whim from one end of Asia to the other, and finally in Africa also. A perfectly unscrupulous man in his dealings with people, he cannot always be trusted, either, in what he tells of his experiences and of the countries he visited. Unlike the careful friars, or Marco Polo, he is unreliable. And yet, because of the wide range of his travels and the many details of his descriptions which are true, we cannot leave him out of any account of Asiatic travel in the Middle Ages.

The last of our writers is a far worse liar than the Moor; for it is almost certain that he never even went to Asia, but simply put together all the accounts by other people that he could find, along with his own sometimes very advanced knowledge of scientific matters, to make a tale which was by far the most popular of all the travel stories of that time. This

arch-hypocrite called himself Sir John de Mandeville; he said that he was a native of St. Albans, in England, and had traveled extensively in Asia and North Africa—adding many another plausible lie. These lies were all believed to be the truth until modern scholars began checking up on the so-called knight's statements, and found that he had made some very bad mistakes in dates and also that the greater part of his supposed travels was stolen from honest writers like Friar Odoric or from historians of his time or earlier. The author of the "Mandeville" was an omnivorous reader: he knew all that had been written about Asia, not only in the travel stories and in the histories but in the fabulous tales of the exploits of Alexander the Great and other heroes in the Orient. And all this hodgepodge of knowledge—fact and legend—he put pell-mell into his book, to make a good story. It is no wonder that his work was so popular.

It is only very recently that the real author of the "Mandeville" has been discovered; and it is not absolutely certain that he has, even now. Probably this ingenious writer was no English knight at all but a notary of the law courts in the Belgian city of Liège named Jean l'Outremeuse, a man who wrote historical and scientific works and, very likely, the "Travels of Sir John de Mandeville." This Jean d'Outremeuse was born in 1338 and died in 1400. His "Travels" were probably written somewhere between 1357 and 1371. They are mainly interesting not as a statement of fact but rather as evidence of the untrue things which people believed about the far-off East in the Middle Ages.

Our travelers have been introduced. They will set out from various points. Some will take the land route to Constantinople; while others will sail from Venice or Genoa in a merchant galley bound for Acre or Layas, or for Constantinople. They will stop for a moment in the imperial city of Constantine, which to medieval eyes was a place of Oriental wonders, the gateway to the East, a city of palaces and churches shim-

mering in gold and brilliant fabrics and filled with marvelous machines which had, for centuries, astonished all visitors. One of these mechanical playthings, called the throne of Solomon, is worth describing in the words of a tenth-century writer:

"There was before the emperor a tree of gilded bronze, with all sorts of gilt birds in its branches, and each bird sang exactly as it would in nature. The throne was so cunningly made that it would be at one moment on the ground, then it would be off the ground and then, suddenly, you would see it high up in the air. The base of the throne, of enormous size, and made either of bronze or of wood, was guarded by huge gilded lions. As soon as I came in the lions roared and the birds sang. I was not frightened, or even astonished, because I had asked about all these things beforehand. After I had prostrated myself before the emperor for the third time, I lifted my head, and, although I had seen him in the first place seated just above the floor, I now beheld him clothed in other robes and seated near the ceiling."

We will not stop in Constantinople, for we have a long journey to go with the travelers. With Friar William of Rubruquis, or with the elder Polos, we will set sail for the city of Soldaia in the Crimea: where Russian traders, with their furs of squirrel and sable, met the merchants from Turkey, laden with cotton, silk, and spices; and where Venetian merchants like the Polos found enough profit to warrant the establishment of a special warehouse for their goods. Perhaps the two brothers stopped in Soldaia at the residence which the elder Marco Polo is known to have had there. We will not stop, however, but shall make what haste we may, by the salt lakes and the isthmus of Perekop, out into the steppes of southern Russia, where the hordes of the Tartars roam.

The traveler must bring rich gifts with him

CHAPTER II

THE MOVING CITY

Setting out to cross the immense wastes of central Asia is, even to-day, no laughing matter. We read in the newspapers or magazines accounts of the careful preparations made by the men, scientists for the most part, who are planning such expeditions. We also read of their exciting and often terrible experiences: how they are captured by hostile tribes or lost for months in trackless deserts or wild mountains. In the time when the elder Polos, shrewd and ambitious merchants as they were, and the brave and zealous friars began the long journey into the East they must have been filled with an even greater, although less definite, apprehension than the traveler of to-day. What gave these first wayfarers from the West their rather vague sense of wonder was not the uncanny animals and strange human monsters of whom they had heard or read as living in those far-off, unknown regions. It was the terrible name of Tartar. The Polos, who seem to

have been calm and practical men, wandering in a leisurely fashion, without any fixed plans, wherever they saw a chance to do a profitable bit of trading, did not have, perhaps, the same feeling of perilous adventure as the friars. They would wait three years in a secure place rather than risk their necks and their goods in an unnecessary danger. When they found a safe opportunity to enrich themselves among the Tartars they went to the farthest limits of the Tartar Empire to do so. It is not from them that we learn of the fear, immense and poignant, which was spreading over Europe.

Batu, the grandson of the great Genghiz Khan, had been mowing down town after town, slaughtering men, women, and children as he swept toward the West, with the "Golden Horde," of which he was the leader, like a conflagration or a tidal wave. Islam was all but conquered; Christendom was quivering from the first blow, which had reached into Hungary, and was crouching to receive another and more devastating attack. The Christian princes were quarreling with one another and could not unite even in the face of so mighty a danger. The Pope, unable to start a new crusade, began grasping at straws. Perhaps his desperate hopes had some foundation in fact. At any rate, it was rumored in Europe that some of the Tartar princes were Christians. So the Pope said to himself that it might be a wise move, since he could not get a crusade started, to send some of his friars as ambassadors first, to find out the disposition of the Khans and to get their consent to found missions in wild Tartary. Then perhaps the Tartars would not slaughter Christians but would confine their carnage to the Mohammedans instead. Friar John of Plano Carpini was one of the first of these ambassadors. Friar William of Rubruquis was sent, not by the Pope but by the equally pious Saint Louis, King of France. These friars who traveled across Tartary went, like the merchants, to ply their trade. But their spirit was different. They had undertaken a definite and serious mission. They were acting, not for themselves but for their

master, the Pope, in the interests of their faith, which was menaced by a great sea of barbarousness and heathendom that had rolled out of an unknown land of darkness and terror as if by devil's enchantment.

Friar William says: "After leaving Soldaia, on the third day, we came upon the Tartars, and when I found myself in their midst it seemed in sooth as though I had been transported into another world." What he found in this new world was probably less terrible but more gruesome than he had imagined. Its horror consisted in the loathsome customs of the Tartars far more than in any real danger to himself, or even to Christianity.

Friar William was a very intelligent and prudent man. Before setting out he was careful to learn all he could about the Tartars from merchants and other people who had had dealings with them. He also tried to get the best advice about what he should take with him. He was able to benefit, besides, by the experiences of some of the friars who had preceded him into the desert. The first thing that any ambassador or other traveler had to take was a large supply of presents for the various Tartar princes whom he would be likely to visit in the course of his journey. For all the accounts tell us that a Tartar ruler would not give audience to any one who came empty-handed or who did not have a gift which seemed large enough in the eyes of his host. Friar Ascelin, a monk who was on one of the Pope's first embassies, had no gifts and refused to give any or even to bend his knees before the Khan. So the Khan refused to see him. Marco Polo tells us that his father and uncle, on their first journey, "laid in a supply of jewels," the whole of which they presented to the Khan of the Golden Horde when they arrived at his court on the Volga. He was so pleased with this offering that he returned them "twice its value." As a rule, however, the Khans seem not to have been so generous.

Friar John, before setting out, asked a certain Russian duke whose acquaintance he had made, about the Tartars.

"He told us," says the friar, "that we must have rich gifts for them, as they were accustomed to beg for them, and if they did not receive any, an ambassador had no chance to obtain anything from them and was even despised. Since we did not want to hurt the business of the Pope and of the Church because of this, we took some of the alms which had been given us to provide for ourselves on the journey, and bought beaver skins and other furs."

In like manner, Friar William writes: "I had brought with me from Constantinople, on the advice of some merchants, fruits, muscatel wine, and delicate biscuits to present to the first Tartar governors, so that my passage might be easier; for they look favorably upon no one who comes with empty hands. But, since I did not find the governors of Soldaia at home, I placed all these things in one of my carts; for they told me that, if I could carry them to Sartach, they would be most acceptable to him."

Sartach was the son of Batu and it was to his camp that Friar William was bound.

The friar had had bad advice in regard to his equipment. He was given the choice of taking oxcarts or sumpter horses to carry the baggage. "And the merchants of Constantinople advised me to buy covered carts like those in which the Ruthenians carry their furs, for I could place in these the things which I should not need to unload every day. But if I took horses I should have to have them unloaded whenever we stopped and load other horses. Besides, I should be able to ride at a more gentle pace following the oxen. Unfortunately, I accepted their advice: for I spent two months reaching Sartach, where I might have taken but one. . . . We set out about the first of June with four covered carts of our own and two others which we borrowed of them and in which we carried our bedding. And they gave us also five horses to ride, one apiece." Thus, "on the third day," they came upon the Tartars, and entered into that new world of barbarous people wandering back and forth over endless plains,

without fixed dwelling places or walled cities but with tents of felt which could be set up when night fell or at the noontide siesta.

"They came flocking about us on horseback," says Friar William, "after they had made us wait for them a long while sitting in the shadow under our carts. The first question which they asked us was whether we had ever been with them before. When we answered that we had not, they began to beg our victuals from us most impudently. We gave them some of our biscuits and wine, which we had brought with us from the city. And when they had drunk one flagon they demanded another, saying that a man does not go into a house with one foot only. But we gave them no more, excusing ourselves that we had only a little. Then they asked us whence we came and whither we were bound, and I answered them that we had heard that Sartach was a Christian and that I wished to go to him, to deliver to him your Majesty's [that is, King Louis's] letters. They were very curious to know whether I came of my own accord or whether I had been sent. I answered that no man had compelled me to come, and that neither would I have come against my will; but that I was traveling of my own free will and at the desire of my superior. Then they asked me what I had in my carts, whether it were gold or silver, or rich garments to carry to Sartach. I answered that Sartach would see for himself what we had brought, when we had come to him, and that it was not their business to ask such questions, but rather to conduct me to their captain, and that, if he thought good, he should cause me to be directed to Sartach; if not, I would return.

"There was in the same province a kinsman of Batu called Scatay, to whom my lord the Emperor of Constantinople had written letters requesting that I be allowed to pass. With our answer, therefore, they were satisfied and they supplied us with horses and oxen and with two men to guide us. Yet before they gave us these things, they made us wait a long while, begging our bread for their little children, admiring

everything they saw on our servants, their knives, gloves, purses and belts, and wanting to have them. I excused myself by saying that we had a long way to travel and that we must not so soon deprive ourselves of things necessary to finish so long a journey. Then they said that I was an impostor. It is true that they took nothing from me by force; but they beg for everything they see in the most importunate and shameless way. And if a man give them something it is so much lost, for they are thankless wretches. They think they are lords of the world and that they have a right to anything they want. If a man give them nought, and afterward stand in need of their service, they will serve him badly. They gave us to drink of their cow's milk, after the butter was churned out of it. They call it *aira*, and it is very sour. And so we departed from them and in truth it seemed to me that we were escaped out of the hands of devils. The next day we came to their captain.

"From the time when we left Soldaia till we arrived at the camp of Sartach, which was the space of two months, we never lay in house or tent, but always in the open air or under our carts. Neither did we ever see any city, but only the tombs of the Comans in great abundance.

"That evening our guide gave us some *cosmos* to drink, and after I had drunk thereof I broke out in a sweat at the strangeness of it; for I had never tasted any before. Yet methought it was savory, as indeed it was."

This is a good place to stop, for a moment, in Friar William's account. For, as one reads his description of his journey, or Friar John's utterly disgusted story, or Marco Polo's statements about the life of the nomadic Tartars, or, in fact, the experiences of any of the old travelers whose fortunes led them into the steppes of the Volga: one grows somewhat disgusted to find everywhere, on the saddles of their swift horses, at the doors of their tents, in the center of their audience chambers, before their altars, skins, jars, cups, and even fountains filled with the national Tartar bev-

erage, *kumiss* (the *cosmos* of Friar William). This favorite drink was fermented mare's milk. It is in vain that Friar William tells us it was savory, that other travelers describe it as resembling a fine white wine. Yet, somehow, fermented mare's milk fits in so perfectly with what the old records tell us of the character and way of life of the wandering Tartars that it becomes a kind of emblem of their race. In another part of his book Friar William describes exactly how *kumiss* was made; but we shall go on to more agreeable subjects.

"In the morning," continues the friar, "we met with the carts of Scatay laden with the dwellings, and methought that a mighty city was moving towards me. I wondered also at the huge droves of oxen and horses and at the flocks of sheep; for I saw only a few men guiding them. So I asked how many men Scatay had under him, and they told me not over five hundred, half of whom we had passed at another camp."

Ibn Batuta, the Moor, who traveled in the next century through these same regions gives an even more realistic description of his first sight of a moving Tartar city: "Then the Khan's camp, which is called by the Turks *ordu*, arrived. We beheld a great city moving with its people, with its markets and its mosques, with its kitchens, whose smoke was rising into the air; for it is the custom of the Turks to cook their food as they travel. Their carts are drawn by horses, and when they come to a camping place they unload the tents and put them on the ground; for they are light. In like manner they unload the mosques and the shops." In another place Ibn Batuta tells how one of the Tartar queens, with whom he was traveling, "had with her her mosque, which she set up at every stage, just as her husband used to do. In this she had daily prayers."

These descriptions call to our minds the long lines of prairie schooners carrying American pioneers westward over our own "steppes;" or, perhaps, a gypsy caravan. But the tent of a Tartar Khan was a much more elaborate affair than a prairie

schooner, and might, in fact, be very luxurious. Marco Polo and the two friars whose routes we have been following, as well as other travelers from the most ancient to the most modern times, have given very exact descriptions of the tents of these wandering tribes; for the habits of Oriental peoples change slowly, and there are, still to-day, nomads near the Sea of Azov and in other parts of Asia who live very nearly, if not precisely, as their ancestors did in Marco Polo's day. It is difficult to choose between the descriptions of the medieval travelers, but perhaps Friar William's is the best to start with:

"They set up the dwelling wherein they sleep on a round frame of withes interlaced and drawn together at the top into a little round hoop, out of which rises a neck like a chimney. This frame they cover with white felt. Oftentimes they cover the felt with chalk or white clay or powdered bone to make it whiter; and sometimes they use black felt. The felt around the neck on the top they adorn with a variety of beautiful designs. And before the door they hang a felt embroidered in colors. They embroider figures of vines and trees, of birds and beasts.

"They make these houses so large that they have sometimes a width of thirty feet. For measuring once the breadth between the wheel tracks of a cart, I found it to be twenty feet; and when the house was upon the cart, it projected over the wheels at least five feet on either side. I counted twenty-two oxen in one team, drawing a house upon a cart, eleven abreast across the width of the cart, and eleven more before them. The axle was of a huge bigness, like the mast of a ship, and one man stood in the doorway of the house on the cart driving the oxen."

Friar William is apparently describing the largest carts he saw in the course of his journey, and they were very likely not the usual size. For Friar John, who had covered practically the same ground a few years before, gives no such figures in describing the ordinary Tartar dwelling. He men-

tions first the fact that there were two sorts of tents: "Some are easy to take down and to set up, and these are carried on pack animals. But there are others which cannot be taken apart like that but are carried all set up on carts. The smaller ones can be drawn by a single ox; the larger may require three or four or even more. And wherever they go, whether to war or elsewhere, they always take these along with them."

The carts on which these tent-houses were carried probably had as a rule two wheels; although an ancient Greek writer mentions carts with four and even six wheels among the nomadic tribes of the steppes. The house probably always projected over the wheels and rested on the shafts in front and behind. In the fourteenth century the Tartars had some four-wheeled wagons, for Ibn Batuta states that he traveled in one on which was placed "a kind of tent of withes laced together with thongs." He says it was very light, was covered with felt or cloth, and had latticed windows, so that the person inside could look out without being seen. It was roomy enough to allow him to sleep, eat, read, or write while he was traveling. The enormous cart which Friar William describes must surely have had four wheels also.

The Tartars had carts of still another sort for carrying their valuables. Friar William describes these as being very high and drawn by camels, so that they would not get wet in crossing rivers. For the trunk, in the form of a diminutive house, which was placed on them was never taken off. This trunk was woven of light twigs and had a little door in front. It was covered with black felt which had a coating of ewe's milk or tallow to keep out the rain, and, like the tents, it was embroidered.

Thus the moving city of tents, the *ordu* of a Tartar prince, traveled over the grassy, treeless plains north of the Caspian Sea, accompanied by its huge and well-kept flocks and herds. The peculiarity of the *ordu* was that there were very few men in it, for few were needed. "One girl," says Friar

William, "will lead twenty or thirty carts at once, as the country is very flat, and they tie the carts with camels or oxen one behind the other. And there sits a girl in the first cart driving the oxen, and all the rest follow at the same pace. When they come to any bad passage they untie them, and guide them over one by one. So they travel slowly along, as a sheep or an ox walks."

The setting up of one of these great *ordus,* when the company stopped for the night, was a very interesting process. Every tent or cart had its allotted place according to the long-established custom of the Tartars. It is Friar William, again, who gives the most interesting description of this ceremony. "When they take down their dwelling houses, they always turn the door to the south." The reason for this was to avoid the prevailing wind, which was westerly. "Then they place the carts laden with chests on either side, within half a stone's throw of the house, so that the house stands between two rows of carts, as if between two walls. The wives make for themselves most beautiful baggage carts, which I could not describe to you except by pictures, and I would right willingly have painted them all for you, had my skill been aught in that art. One rich Tartar may have one or two hundred such carts with chests. Batu has twenty-six wives, each of whom has one large house, besides other little ones which are set up behind the great one, and which are like closets, for the sewing girls to dwell in. And to every one of the large houses belong two hundred carts. When they take their houses off the carts the first wife places hers on the extreme west, and after her the others in order of their rank, so that the last wife is on the extreme east. And there will be the distance of a stone's throw between one house and the next." Sometimes a great lord counted several thousand black carts and felt tents in his *ordu.*

Now that Friar William has drawn such a graphic picture it seems appropriate to explain that the word *ordu*, which at first meant the tent, or collection of tents, of a Tartar

ruler, came to be applied to the people who lived in the tents, to the whole tribe. This is the same word as *horde* in English. And the Western or Kipchak Tartars who swept over into Hungary about twenty years before Friar William went on his mission, were known as the "Golden Horde" because of the magnificent tent, or *ordu*, of their leader, Batu, on the Volga.

Perhaps it would have been more logical to describe the personal appearance of the Tartars before telling about their houses. We usually meet a person before we are invited to his home. But somehow, the first thing that comes into one's mind when one thinks of the steppes of Tartary along the Volga is a wide sweep of green plain with a city of tents growing larger and more distinct as it moves slowly toward one. One has heard of the deadly onslaughts of wild Tartar "hordes" in battle; then one catches sight of the moving city; and finally comes the "close-up" of a strange, foreign face.

Here is how Friar John describes the Tartar physiognomy: "They are unlike all other people in appearance, for they are broader between the eyes and the cheeks and their cheek bones stand out above the jaws. They have flat, small noses and little eyes, and the lids are drawn up to the eyebrows. They are unusually slim at the waist, with few exceptions, and almost all of them are short. They usually have very little beard, but some of them have a few hairs on their upper lips and chins, and this they never shave. They are shaven on their crowns like priests, and they generally shave their hair also right round their heads, from one ear to the other, for a space about the width of three fingers. On their foreheads they shave off all the hair for about two fingers' breadth. What hair remains behind the crown and the shaven space on the forehead they let grow down to the eyebrows, and they wear the hair on each side longer than in front. The rest is long like that of women, and they make two braids of it, tying each behind the ear. They also have small feet."

This complicated haircut is very hard to visualize, and the

various travelers seem to have had difficulty in describing it; for their descriptions do not all give quite the same impression. They agree, however, that the Tartars shaved the crown of their heads, that they wore their hair longer at the sides than in front, and that they had a braid behind each ear.

The most curious thing about the clothing of this extraordinary nation is that the men and the young girls were dressed exactly alike. Friar John says: "The clothes of their men and women are all of one fashion. They use neither capes, cloaks, hoods nor skins; but they wear tunics of fine cotton, of silk stuffs or of gold brocades, and they are made as follows: they are open all the way down and are double over the chest; they are fastened by a lace on the left side and with three on the right, and on the left they are open as far as the armpit. They have dresses of all sorts of furs made in the same way. The outside fur garment they wear with the fur outside, and they leave it open behind, with a tail reaching to the knees."

The dresses of cotton and silk, Friar William tells us, were used for summer; the fur ones for winter. He is speaking, of course, of the clothes of the well-to-do Tartars. The silks, the cloth of gold, and the cotton, he says, came from Cathay and from Persia and other southern countries. The silken and gold cloth was a specialty of China or Cathay, then, as it is to-day, and European merchants carried it back to their rich customers at home to be made into splendid gowns and cloaks. The cotton of Persia and India was the finest in the world at the time of Friar William. But the many kinds of furs for winter garments came from Russia and other countries to the far north. The friar says that in winter they wore two fur gowns, the inner one with the fur on the inside and the outer one, of wolf or fox or badger, with the fur outside. The poor people wore outside garments made of dog or kid skins. As a further precaution against the severity of northern winters passed in tent-houses, the Tartars padded their cloth-

ing, the rich with silk and the poor with cotton or wool. They had fur breeches also. Even to-day the Mongols wear trousers of sheepskin in winter, with the fur on the inside.

The young girls dressed just like the men, but after a woman was married she wore a very full gown and a most remarkable headdress not so very unlike some of the tall ones worn by European ladies a little after the time of the Polos. Both Friar William and Friar John describe this headdress as well as they can. Here is what Friar William says: "They have also a headdress which they call *bocca*, made of bark or some other light material, and it is so big that two hands can just reach round it. It is more than a cubit high and square like the capital of a pillar. They cover this with rich silk, and it is hollow inside, and on the square top of it they put a bunch of quills or of slender canes a cubit or more long. And they adorn this tuft with peacock feathers on top, and, round the edge, with feathers from the mallard's tail and with precious stones. The wealthy ladies wear this kind of ornament upon their heads, fastening it on tightly with a broad band, or amice, with an opening in the top for the spire to come through. They fix their hair in a knot and stuff it into the *bocca*, which is then tied tightly under their chins. Thus when a company of ladies are riding together, and are beheld afar off, they seem to be soldiers with helmets on their heads and their lances erect; for the *bocca* looks like a helmet and the tuft above it like a lance. And all the women ride astride like men, tying their dresses at the waist with a piece of blue silk, and with another band higher up. They wear a piece of white stuff below their eyes, down to their breast, when they ride. These ladies are exceedingly fat, and the lesser their noses be the fairer are they esteemed." He adds that they painted their faces most horribly. It is no wonder that he was shocked by this; for the people in northern Asia have, for a long time, rubbed their faces with a black grease, to protect their skin from the weather.

Headdresses resembling these have been worn in many

parts of Asia at various times, and are even to-day, but it is difficult to say whether any of them are exactly like the ones described by the friars. Friar John, in his description, seems to have lost courage after telling about the women's caps, for he says that the men and the young girls "have caps unlike those of other peoples, but we cannot describe their form clearly."

According to Marco Polo and other travelers, the women did almost all the work. It was they who drove the carts, set up the tents, milked the cows, made the butter, prepared and sewed the skins, and did the buying and selling; while the "men lived like gentlemen and took no thought except for hunting and hawking and caring for their goshawks and falcons." It was, however, the men who did the fighting, and since this was one of the principal occupations of the Tartars in the time when Marco went out, they must usually have had plenty to do. However, Friar William says they made the bows and arrows, the harness for the horses, the framework for the tents and the carts. They also looked after the horses and churned the *cosmos*, or kumiss.

The food problem among them was rather simple. The flocks and herds followed the camp wherever it went, even to war; so they were always sure of having enough meat and milk. Apparently they ate little else; for the travelers tell us that they had neither bread nor wine. The milk they always drank sour, just as the people of those parts do to-day. We have seen that fermented mare's milk, or kumiss, was their favorite beverage, and that it was prepared in such a way that it was very palatable. In fact, Friar William says it had a taste like that of milk of almonds. The Tartars also prepared a milk powder, which, when mixed with water, made a drink for taking on long journeys. They were great hunters, learning to shoot with bows and to ride horseback almost in their babyhood. Another characteristic which simplified their living was that they were accustomed to hardship and privation and that they needed very little food compared

with the more luxurious Europeans. The first friars who traveled through Tartary complained continually of being very nearly starved on the rations which were given them by the Tartar rulers whose kingdoms they visited. But perhaps the Tartars were not intending to be niggardly. It may be that they gave the hungry Westerners as much as they were accustomed to eat themselves. The friars, however, thought otherwise.

Comania

CHAPTER III

THE GOLDEN HORDE

To trace the route of one of the old travelers across the steppes is very difficult. And the reason why it is difficult is that one cannot tell, very often, just where a certain wayfarer found such and such a camp or *ordu*. Friar William will say: "After riding for so many days we arrived at Sartach's *ordu*." He usually gives the direction very inaccurately; so one must guess, from his description of the country, with its rivers and occasional forests, the approximate location of the moving city. We can also tell something from the time of year. For the Tartar chiefs went north for the summer and south for the winter, after the fashion of birds. In summer, too, they sought the river valleys, where pasturage was good and where there was plenty of water. In winter they melted the snow for water and their beasts knew how to burrow down for their fodder. But if the travelers are indefinite about their routes they are frightfully realistic about the hardships of them. A man had to be particularly robust to

survive in good health the hunger and thirst and cold of the long northern journey to Cathay.

After passing the isthmus of Perekop they came into a beautiful green plain, containing "neither forest nor hill nor stone, but only the richest pasturage." This was Comania, and is where the wandering Comans used to live before Batu drove them westward. When Friar William and Friar John rode through, however, they saw nothing but burial mounds or little stone pyramids, or, farther east, graveyards with flat stones, round or square, and with four upright ones to mark the "four corners of the world." These tombs were all that was left of the former inhabitants—except one gruesome vestige described by Friar John. In Comania, he says, and in the "Land of the Cangles" beyond, they "found many human skulls and bones scattered about on the ground." And another traveler of a very few years before, the Constable of Lesser Armenia, Sempad, says: "We saw no large cities for the space of three days, but more than a hundred mounds, huge and marvelous, of the bones of those whom the Tartars had slaughtered." It is curious that Friar William does not mention these heaps of bones.

Through this green but gruesome country, Friar William took his precarious way, feeling that he had passed "through one of the gates of hell." "We traveled toward the east," he says, "seeing nothing but earth and sky, only from time to time on our right the sea called the Sea of Tanais, and the tombs of the Comans, visible two leagues away, because they were accustomed to burying a whole family in one place. So long as we were traveling through the desert it went well with us, but I cannot express in words the troubles which I had when I came to any of their dwelling places. For our guide wanted me to go in to every captain with a present" (Friar John calls it "making a bow with something") "and we had not enough supplies for that. For we were every day eight persons eating our provisions, not counting others who chanced to come and who wanted to eat with us. We ourselves were

five in number, and the servants, our guides, were three, two to drive our carts and one to conduct us to Sartach. They had not given us enough meat and we could find nothing to be bought for money." Friar William more than once complains that the Tartars wanted linen and other woven fabrics instead of gold and silver in exchange for food. On one occasion some Tartars to whom his servants showed a few *yperpera* "rubbed the coins with their fingers and then smelled them, to see whether they had copper alloy." "And as we sat under our carts in the shade, by reason of the extreme heat at that season, they would push in so importunately among us as nearly to crush us, so curious were they to see all our things."

This seems to have been the experience of all the friars who ventured into Tartary. It was the custom among the Tartars for any person on a mission to one of their princes to "bow with a present." The Polos, and others like the Armenian king, Hayton, who had rich presents to offer, were well received. But even though the friars, by the rules of their order, were not supposed to carry treasure with them, the Khans, although, in most cases, polite and even curious in regard to Christian customs, seem to have treated them in a rather niggardly way as far as their physical comfort went. We find again and again some such statement as: "They gave us no food that day," or, "For four days we had only a little millet and broth."

Traveling along north of the Sea of Azov, or Tanais, one reaches the river Ron, which Friar William calls Tanais and says is the boundary between Europe and Asia. In fact, it had been considered so from very ancient times. He does not tell just where they came to it, but from what he says farther on, he must have reached it quite a little above where it makes a bend which brings it near the Volga. At any rate, he says that Batu and Sartach had established a village there and a ferry for merchants and envoys. The Tartars themselves had a most remarkable way of crossing streams: they had great

round felts in which they placed their valuables and some hard things such as saddles; then with a thong they would draw the outer edge tight; this bundle formed a kind of raft, on which the owner of the goods sat; the raft was then tied to his horse's tail and a servant swam in front, leading the horse. If a man's belongings were not numerous or bulky enough to form a boat that would hold him, he led his horse himself and merely tied the bundle to his horse's tail.

Foreign envoys and merchants, however, seem not to have been compelled to cross the rivers of Tartary in true Tartar fashion. Besides, that method was only for horsemen, and not for a princely *ordu* with its hundreds of carts. The ferry was primitive enough, however; probably it was a sort of canoe. For Friar William says that, after ferrying over the passengers, they tied two boats together to take the carts across; for the boats were so small that they had to put one wheel in one and the other in the one alongside.

The river, "which was as broad as the Seine at Paris," was full of fine fish. The people of this village were Ruthenians, who, unlike the Tartars, knew how to catch fish, and whose men had "capes like the Germans and felt caps, high and pointed," while the women had their hair "dressed as among us, but their outside gowns trimmed with squirrel or other fur from the bottom to the knee."

The Tanais, at this point, had beautiful forests along its banks, running northward, and to the south, across the plains, "very high mountains," which the older travelers called the Caspian Mountains, but which are to-day the Caucasus. But although the country was so beautiful between the Tanais and the Volga, which Friar William calls the Etilia, and which Marco Polo, by some strange mistake, designates as the Tigris, the journey was by no means pleasant. It was even dangerous, for there were bands of robbers on the road, people whom the Tartars had subjugated and enslaved. Friar William says they circulated at night in companies of twenty or thirty, armed with bows and arrows, and that they killed

any one they found. They would steal fresh horses to replace their own, or else to use as food. If the traveler escaped these bands of marauders he reached the Volga, "the largest of rivers, four times wider than the Seine and very deep, coming from Greater Bulgaria in the north and flowing south into a lake or sea, which is now called the Sea of Sirsan." Friar William also remarks that when he saw the waters of the Etilia, "he wondered whence so much water could come, far away in the north." The Sea of Sirsan was the Caspian, and Friar William was the first Western European to state that it was a sea and not a gulf of the ocean.

It was on the eastern bank of this greatest of rivers that travelers had their first view of the *Syra Orda*, the "Golden Horde" or tent of the Khan of the Kipchak Tartars. It would be down near the mouth of the Volga, at Sarai, not far from Astrakhan, if the winter season had set in. In the height of summer it would be far to the north, at Bolgara, where travelers from the south went to observe the strange short summer nights and long days. In the mid-season the Khan's camp would be at the village of Ukek, or Ucaca, halfway to Bolgara.

The Tartars, although they were nomads, without the tradition of city walls and fixed dwelling places, were very quick to adopt the habits of life and thought of the peoples they conquered. Marco Polo, after describing the customs of the Tartars, says that these customs were rapidly being abandoned, that the Tartars in Cathay had become Chinese, while those in Syria had adopted the Mohammedan religion and manner of life. Thus, Friar William, on his return from Cathay, is informed by Sartach that he will find Batu at the new city which he is building at Sarai. In other words, Batu—or some say it was his brother—decided to live in a palace, at least part of the time. And the city that he founded became a most beautiful and populous one, according to Ibn Batuta and others, who visited it in the next century. Ibn Batuta says it took half a day to ride through it. Another Mohammedan

traveler states that the Khan's palace had a golden crescent on top and a surrounding wall with towers. The city itself had no walls, which was quite unusual for a medieval town. But it had markets and baths.

Ukek, or Ucaca, was another settlement probably founded by the Tartars. It was of far less importance than Sarai, where the imposing palace of the Khans was built. In fact, the name Sarai means "palace."

Bolgara, which to tourists like Ibn Batuta seemed to be at the very edge of the habitable world in the north, was different. Bolgara was a very old city, the capital of the country known in the Middle Ages as Great Bulgaria. It was a commercial city, with an export trade in furs, wax, honey,

Ruins of Bolgara

hazelnuts, Russian leather, and fossil ivory. To-day the ruins of the ancient city can be seen at the village of Bolgari, which lies four miles east of the Volga. But the city was built on the river bank; only, the river has changed its course since then. Marco Polo himself apparently did not go to Bolgara; but his father and his uncle went there on their first outward journey. Probably that is why he does not describe the city in his account. But Ibn Batuta went there for a very definite reason: he wanted to see for himself the short nights in summer and the correspondingly long days. The shortness

of the nights was very detrimental to his religious devotions, for, he says, they were not long enough for him to finish all his prayers. The dawn came too soon!

Beyond Bolgara, far in the mysterious north, lay the Land of Darkness. None of the travelers whose journeys we are following visited the Land of Darkness; so what they tell us is hearsay and not accurate in every particular. Ibn Batuta says that it lay forty days' journey north of Bolgara. "To that country," he says, "I was told, there is no traveling except upon little sledges drawn by large dogs. And the steppe is covered with ice, upon which neither the feet of men nor the shoes of horses can take any hold. But these dogs can take a firm hold on the ice with their claws and do not slip. No one enters this wilderness except wealthy merchants, each of whom owns about a hundred of these sledges, which they load with provisions, drink and firewood, for there are neither trees nor stones nor houses there. The guide in this country is a dog who has made the journey many times before. The price of such an animal is about 1000 dinars. He is yoked to the sledge by the neck, and three other dogs are harnessed with him. But he is the leader, and all the other dogs follow him with the sledge and stop when he stops. The master never strikes or scolds this dog, and at mealtime the dogs are always fed first, before the men; for if this were not done the chief dog would run off, sulky, and leave his master to perish. When the travelers have completed their forty days, or stages, through this desert they arrive at the Land of Darkness." Polo says that it was a thirteen days' journey, and that at the end of every stage there were a posthouse to lodge the couriers and "about forty huge dogs, almost as big as donkeys." The sledges, he says, had a bearskin thrown on them on which the courier sat, and were drawn by six dogs. At every posthouse a new relay of dogs and sledges was ready to start, and the first one turned back. Friar William says he heard that these dogs were as big as oxen. All our travelers, who had never seen the dogs for themselves, naturally thought they must be

enormously big to be able to draw loaded sledges. The Eskimo dogs of Alaska are probably very much like those that took merchants to the Land of Darkness to buy furs; for the Siberian ones were—and are to-day—half domesticated Arctic wolves. To-day, however, dog sledges are not used so far south as they seem to have been in Polo's time.

Polo tells us other things about Siberia. He mentions the "great white bears, more than twenty palms long," "black foxes, wild asses, sables," and other fur-bearing animals. He does not say, however, that the bears and the foxes are found along the Frozen Ocean, and that it is only in southern Siberia

On the way to the Land of Darkness

that the wild asses roam. The cold is so great in the mountains and valleys of the wilderness before the Land of Darkness that "all the houses of the people are underground." This is not perfectly accurate, for they merely have earth piled up against the walls to keep out the cold. King Conchi, a descendant of Genghiz Khan, ruled in this country and lived in the old Tartar manner, so Polo says.

Now the dog sledges have brought the travelers, in their imagination, to the edge of that weird Land of Darkness, so called, as Marco tells us, "because neither sun nor moon nor star ever shines there but it is always as dark as our twilight. The people have no lord of their own, nor any foreign ruler,

but live like beasts." And then he describes an ingenious method used by the Tartars to find their way back after they had ventured into the Land of Darkness. Probably his description is not truth but legend, for the same story had been told long before Polo told it and had been applied to different heroes, among them Alexander the Great:

"The Tartars enter there on mares which have foals, and they leave the foals outside at the entrance. And when the Tartars have robbed and plundered all that they can find, the mares lead them back to their foals, for they can find the way much better than the men."

Marco says that the people who live in the Land of Darkness are great hunters, and that they gather quantities of ermine, sable, fox, and other furs and bring them to the border to sell to those who dwell where the light is. Ibn Batuta describes this trade in greater detail: "Each man" (from the "light" country) "leaves what he has brought with him and goes back to his posthouse. The next day they return to look at their goods, and find beside them sable, ermine, and other furs. If the merchant likes what he finds he takes it away; if not, he leaves it, and the people of the Land of Darkness may then add more to it. Sometimes, however, these people will take back their own goods, and leave those of the merchants. In this way their buying and selling is carried on, and the merchants know not whether it is with mankind or with demons that they have to do, since they see no one during the exchange of goods."

This method of trading is known as "dumb trade," and, according to the accounts of a great many different people, has been practiced in various times and countries.

Polo's account of the trade in furs on the borders of the Land of Darkness is said to have been responsible for the founding of the Hudson's Bay Company. When Prince Rupert, the founder, read this chapter, he evolved his plan—so they say—for bartering for furs with the Indians in Canada.

Polo is less imaginative than Ibn Batuta; he does not accuse the inhabitants of the Land of Darkness of being demons, but says that they are "tall and well formed, but very pale."

Friar John and his companion, Friar Benedict the Pole, call these people the "Samogeds," the Samoyeds of to-day. "And beyond the Samogeds are those who, they say, have dog faces, and who live in the wastes along the shores of the Ocean." This was not the only place in Asia where there were said to be dog-headed people. There is a Chinese legend about a country in the extreme northeast of Asia where the men look like dogs and the women do not. King Hayton of Armenia reports that in this latter country "the women have reason just like men"; while the men are without reason and like dogs. Friar John himself, in the part of his book where he outlines the history of the Tartars, tells of how Genghiz Khan fought a disastrous battle with these dog-men. For the dog-men would jump into the water in the middle of winter and then roll in the dirt, which would freeze to their backs and form an impenetrable armor. Then there were other dog-headed folk whom all the travelers going through the Indian Ocean were sure to meet; but these will be described later on.

South of the Samogeds, according to Friar Benedict, lived the "Parocitæ, who have a very small mouth and cannot chew anything, so that they must needs live on liquids and the odor of meats and fruits." The legend of a race living on smell is a very old one, too, and belongs to more than one country.

Before we leave the Volga, "greatest of rivers," and the countries lying around its course, there is another wonder to be seen. It is reported for the first time not by Marco Polo, nor yet by Friar John or Friar William, observant as they were; but by an equally reliable Westerner who went out to Cathay in the next century, at about the same time as Ibn Batuta. This was the monk from Italy called Friar Odoric, the Bohemian. He had never been in the Volga country, but he had heard of this wonder from other people. Here is what he says: "A great marvel have I heard tell of from men worthy

of belief, but I did not see it for myself. In the kingdom of Cadili" (that is, Etilia or Volga) "there are mountains which are called the Caspians. And they say that in these mountains there grow melons which are marvelously big. When they are ripe the people open them and find inside a little live beast which looks like a newborn lamb. And they eat these melons along with the little beasts. Many people will not believe this, and yet it is just as possible and worthy of belief as the geese that grow in trees in Ireland."

This tale of the Vegetable or Scythian Lamb, which Odoric was the first traveler, apparently, to mention, was still believed in the seventeenth century. "Mandeville" says that he has eaten them, but he is such a liar that we need not believe him. He was certainly only copying from Odoric, as he did in

The Vegetable Lamb

many other parts of his work. But the really interesting thing about this "lamb" is that there is a plant of the fern family called *baromez*, the Russian word for lamb, which grows, not

in the Caucasus mountains but in a high salt plain west of the Volga, and this plant does look something like an animal. It is covered with a silky, yellow down and grows in a horizontal position, supported by several roots. When one cuts it open it is soft inside and flesh-colored. Without doubt this is the vegetable lamb of Odoric. As for the "geese that grow in trees," they are goose barnacles.

Another thing that impressed travelers from warmer climates who happened to visit the Volga in the wintertime was its freezing over. Ibn Batuta says that the Khan would wait until it froze hard to cross it with his court, or to travel upon it. They made the traveling easier by "placing upon the ice thousands of bundles of hay." And "Mandeville" states that mighty battles were fought on the ice of the Etilia, with "more than 200,000 on each side."

The travelers, having stayed their appointed time with the Khan of the Golden Horde, having probably ridden around with the moving city at a respectful distance from the Khan's great tent and been more or less well treated according to the value of their presents, prepared to set out once more on their long, weary journey across the uninhabited waste, or desert, which would bring them at last to cities again. Marco's father and uncle, starting from Ukek on the Volga, traveled for about sixty days across the desert, meeting only Tartars busy with their flocks and herds, and arrived at the city of Bokhara. Their route lay between the Caspian Sea and the Sea of Kwarizm, or the Aral Sea. Friar John and Friar William both went farther north, passing above the head of the Sea of Kwarizm and finally reaching towns to the north or the northeast of Bokhara. They were "cold, hungered, and athirst." Friar John had to drink melted snow as his only drink. There was frost and ice in the desert. Even the horses grew weary and had to be urged on with whips. Northwest of them lay Greater Bulgaria, "the last country with towns." They passed from Comania, across the Jagac or Ural River, into the Land of the Cangles, strewn with its

skulls and bones. Camps of Tartars wandered there, and wild asses too fleet to capture. At last they saw high mountains and a watered plain, which was cultivated. And there were the ruins of cities and villages razed by the Tartars. The first settlement that Friar William reached was Kinchat on the Talas River, which flows into a marsh. The captain of the town came out to greet the party with mead and drinking cups, for the friar was traveling with envoys of Batu Khan. "There," says Friar William somewhat wistfully, "I saw vines, and twice I drank wine."

If, instead of going north of the Sea of Kwarizm, as the two friars did, one took the route of Marco's father and uncle, between the Caspian Sea and the Aral, one would come to the city of Kwarizm, or Urgendj, on the River Jon or Oxus. Marco does not mention this city, although his father and his uncle must have passed through it; but Ibn Batuta tells us that, after crossing the desert from Sarai, and seeing carriages drawn by camels, he came to Kwarizm. "This is the largest city the Turks have," he says, "and is very crowded on account of the multitude of its inhabitants. . . . I have never seen better bred or more liberal people than those of Kwarizm, or people more friendly to strangers. . . . They have in Kwarizm a melon to which none, except that of Bokhara, can be compared: the nearest to it is that of Ispahan. The peel of the melon is green, the inside red. It is very sweet and rather hard. The most remarkable thing about it is that it may be sliced, dried in the sun, and then packed in baskets, just like Malaga figs. Then it is carried to the farthest parts of India and China. There is no dried fruit superior to it, and while I was living at Delhi, when the merchants came there bringing these dried melons, I never missed sending for some."

These melons seem to have been grown and prepared all through the region south of the Aral Sea, for Polo speaks of them as a product of the city of Sapurgan, of Shibrgan, as it

is called now, a town southeast of Kwarizm, on the route from Persia.

Going on from Kwarizm, or Urgendj, the Polo brothers arrived at Bokhara, "the best city in all Persia." This is all Marco says about it. Ibn Batuta also says that it is the principal city of the country beyond the Oxus. He adds that the Tartars, in their wars of conquest during the century before, had almost destroyed it, and that when he visited it, there were no well-educated people there. It seems strange that he should have made such a statement about Bokhara, which at

Samarkand

that time was one of the great educational centers of the Mohammedans; and Ibn Batuta was a Mohammedan. Genghiz Khan had destroyed it, but it had risen quickly from its ruins, and was a rich and populous city. It is hard to understand why Polo did not tell more about it, for his father and his uncle were there for three years before they started to the court of Kubla Khan at Cambaluc. Bokhara is now much less important than it was in the days of our travelers.

A little to the east of Bokhara lies "the great and noble city" of Samarkand. This is another ancient and important city, like Bokhara. But none of the travelers whose accounts of Asia we are describing seem to have visited it. The elder Polos must, however, have gone there at some time during their three-year stay at Bokhara. Marco almost certainly was never there; for, instead of describing something of the city, he simply tells a story of a Christian church there which had a pillar that did not touch the ground, but which nevertheless held up the roof. This pillar, so he says, used to have a pedestal made of a very fine stone which belonged to the Saracens. When the Christianized Khan, who had permitted the builders of the church to take the stone from the Saracens, died, the Saracens demanded back their stone. And they refused to take money instead, because they thought the church would fall down when the stone was removed. The Christians, however, prayed that a miracle might be performed; and so it was: for, the next day, when they went into the church, the stone had been removed and the pillar was still standing!

This is all he says of Samarkand; which was in his time one of the most famous cities in Asia. Afterward, its importance waned; but since the building of the Transcaspian Railroad it has become again a rather thriving town.

The Stiff-Legged People

CHAPTER IV

THE ROAD TO KARAKORUM

There were many routes leading from Turkestan into Cathay and Mongolia. We shall describe first what the two friars saw along the northern route to Karakorum.

After leaving the village of Kinchat, where the thirsty Friar William had been fortunate enough to find something besides kumiss to drink, the road led through a mountainous region crossed by rivers. Here the Kara Khitai, or "Black Cathayans," used to live in summer, when the pasturage was good. For these were the "alps" or pasture lands of the Alexander range of mountains. The road led across the Chu and the Ili rivers and then up a wide valley where it still passes to-day. This region, according to a Chinese traveler of Friar William's time, was thickly populated and very well cultivated, and covered with ancient ruins. Friar William says about the same thing. On the south were high mountains; while north of them was a great "sea or lake, twenty-five days in circumference." This was Lake Balkash. The plain through which

they rode was watered by many streams flowing into the lake. The friar says that the plain used to contain many towns but that the Tartars had destroyed them so that they might use the fertile ground for pasturing their flocks. After passing a fine city, which he calls Equius, but which has not been identified by modern travelers and scholars, he came to a large town named Cailac, which was a little west of the modern city of Kopal. He found a market there and many merchants, and also three "idol" temples—by which he means Buddhist.

"We came," continues Friar William, "to the end of that province, and to the head of the sea, which seemed as rough as the ocean. We saw there a large island." Friar William has apparently made a mistake; for he is referring to Lake Balkash, while the "sea" which he saw here was the Alakul, a much smaller body of water. He thought it was the end of Lake Balkash; and, in fact, it was at one time, although probably not when Friar William passed it. "My comrade went to the shore and dipped a piece of cloth in the water, which was drinkable but salty. And there we saw a valley running through the high mountains to the southeast to another big sea, and a river flowed through the valley from that sea to the other. And through that valley blows, almost all the time, such a wind that it is very dangerous to cross the valley, for the wind might carry one into the sea. We crossed it, going north toward high mountains which were covered with deep snow."

The "sea" at the other end of the valley was the Ebi Nor, and Friar William's description of the violent wind which blows from it is perfectly accurate. It is the prevailing southeast wind, which, in winter, sometimes carries such quantities of snow and sand that a whole camp may be buried. There are other "wind hills" like this in the same region; where a gorge in the mountains will gather the wind in a strong current.

Friar William tells of a town, which he did not visit, about three days' journey south of the Alakul. He calls it Bolat and

says that the Great Khan Mangu had taken some German slaves there "to dig for gold and make arms." This town, the name of which is said to mean "steel," was to the east of Lake Sairam, the "Sea of Milk," and the friar's remark about the employment of the Germans is particularly interesting because the Mongols did not know how to extract iron from the ore, except by a very crude process; so that they were obliged to import most of the iron they needed for the manufacture of their arms. Friar William says that they levied a tax of unwrought iron on the people they had conquered along the Danube and around Constantinople. These German slaves, then, must have had plenty to do in Bolat, the "steel" town. A Chinese traveler of this time says that in Bolat the houses, built of clay, had glass windows, and it may be that the same Germans had introduced the manufacture of glass also. To-day, however, glass is hardly known there.

To the northeast of the Alakul, on the River Imil, was the town of Imil. "To the south of it," says Friar John, "there is a great desert in which wild men are said to live. They have no language and there are no joints in their legs, so that, if they fall down, they cannot get up again without help. They do, however, know how to make felt out of camel's hair, and with this they manufacture clothes and shelters. If they are chased by Tartars and wounded with arrows, they will stop the wound with grass and flee swiftly away." King Hayton, the Armenian, says that the inhabitants of this desert are naked and "have horse hair on their heads." And there are modern travelers who have reported wild men in central Asia. King Hayton speaks also of yellow and black wild horses, of wild white and black mules, and of wild camels with two humps. Piebald wild horses, as well as the other wild animals, have been seen in our own times also in the Dsungarian Desert, where the medieval travelers saw or heard of them. We do not know that modern visitors to this country have reported that the wild men have stiff legs!

From the river Imil the way led along a narrow mountain road. It was very cold when Friar William passed by, for it was in December, and he had to turn his sheepskin so that the wool was on the outside. No one was to be seen, since the grazing was not good, except the "iams," who were the men stationed at the end of every day's journey to look after the ambassadors to the court of the Khan. In the mountain gorges, says the friar, "among some fearful rocks, the guide sent word beseeching me to say some prayers to chase away the devils. For in this gorge devils would suddenly carry men off, and one never knew what they might do. They would sometimes seize the horse and leave the rider, or else tear a man to pieces and leave his corpse on the horse: things like

The Gorge of the Devils

that happened there very often. So we chanted loudly the Creed, and by God's mercy we all went safely through." Goblins haunted all these mountains, and many stories were told of their pranks, gruesome or mischievous, by travelers of many nations who went there in the Middle Ages. Friar Odoric says that it became a regular business of the Christian monks in China to drive out devils and that they "thought no more of it than if they were driving a dog out of a house."

The mountains through which Friar William was traveling and where he rode through the gorge of devils were the Altai Mountains, said by Polo to be the burial place of the Khans. He tells us much that is true about the burial customs; yet it was not in these Altai Mountains that the Khans were buried, but in others of the same name to the north of Cambaluc. "And you may know that all the great lords who are descended from Genghiz Khan are buried in a great mountain which is called Altai, and that thither, no matter where they may die, though it were at a hundred days' journey from that mountain, they must be carried to be buried. And I will tell you another marvel. When the body of the Great Khan is being carried to that mountain, all the people whom they meet on the way are put to the sword by those who are conducting the body, and they say: 'Go and serve our master in the other world!' For they believe truly that all those whom they kill will go to serve him there. And they do the same thing with the horses; for, when their lord dies, they kill all the best horses that he possessed, so that he may have them in the other world. And you may know that when Mangu Khan died more than 20,000 people, who met the body as it was being carried to burial, were slain."

Far to the north of the city of Camul, where "the people do nothing but play and sing and dance," lies a province which Marco calls "Chingintalas," but which has not been absolutely identified with any modern place; it was probably part of the northern Altai Mountains. Here is what the

traveler says of it: "At the northern border of this province there is a mountain in which is a very good vein of steel. And in this same mountain is found a vein of the material from which the salamander is made. And, of a truth, the salamander is not a beast, as they say, but is something else, which I will describe to you. You know well, forsooth, that it is not in the nature of any animal to live in the fire, because every

The Salamander

animal is made up of the four elements." What Polo says here does not seem very clear to the modern reader; but to the men of his time, and long after, it was quite intelligible. For it used to be the general belief that all living things were composed of different combinations of the "four elements"; that is, of earth, air, fire, and water. And each of these elements was supposed to have a race of beings, called elemental spirits, living in it. Sylphs lived in the air, gnomes in the earth, naiads in the water, and salamanders in the fire. We are all familiar with the little animals called salamanders. It is of these that Marco is speaking when he says that no animal could exist in the fire. But the outstanding property of the fire-dwelling "salamander" was, of course, that it could not burn. And when Marco says that the salamander is found in a vein of the mountain, he is speaking of asbestos, which, in the Middle Ages, was thought to be made of salamander wool! He then goes on to tell how asbestos was prepared.

"I had a companion named Zurficar, a very clever Turk, whom the Great Khan sent to that province for three years to procure the salamander. And my companion told me about it, and I myself saw it. I tell you that when they have dug some of this vein out of the mountain, they crush and break it, and it separates and makes a thread like wool. Then it is dried and ground in a great copper mortar, and then washed free of all the worthless earth, until only the fibers remain. These are then spun and made into cloths. And when the cloths are finished they are not white at all, but when they are put in the fire and left a while, they become as white as snow. And whenever this salamander cloth gets soiled, it is put in the fire again until it becomes white. What I have told you about the salamander is the truth, and anything different from this that you may hear is a lie. And I will also tell you that there is in Rome a salamander cloth which the Great Khan sent to the Pope as a present, to wrap the Holy Sudarium of Our Lord Jesus Christ." We hear of more than one handkerchief or towel of asbestos being sent as a present, in the

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Middle Ages, by some Oriental potentate to a European monarch.

After crossing more mountains, always to the east, the travelers came to a "vast plain, wide as a sea, in which no hills were to be seen." If it were wintertime, the cold would be intense, and one might freeze one's feet. Even in May there would be frost. In winter the air was still, but when the cold winds blew in April animals would die. Friar John says that the weather is unsettled there at all times of the year, with hail and violent thunderstorms in summer and great falls of snow in winter, in some parts though not everywhere. In this plain, Friar William found the *ordu* of the Great Khan Mangu moving in leisurely fashion until spring, when the emperor went to his capital city of Karakorum, on the edge of the desert on the River Orkhon, south of Lake Baikal.

"On Palm Sunday," says Friar William, "we drew near Karakorum. At daybreak we blessed some boughs which had not yet begun to bud. About the ninth hour we entered into the city, our Cross and banner erect, and went through the Saracen quarter, where there is a market place, to the church. . . . When the mass had been sung it was past noon. Master William, therefore, took us joyfully home to dine with him. His wife was the daughter of parents from Lorraine, but Hungarian born. She spoke both the French and the Tartar languages fluently. We met there another person too, named Basil, whose father was English. Basil was born in Hungary also, and he knew French and Tartar. After a most joyful meal, they took us to our tent, which the Tartars had put up in a clear space by the church."

The church of which the friar speaks was a Christian one, but it was not orthodox. All through Asia the travelers found Nestorians, a heretical sect that was often a great trial to the good Catholics who went out to make converts to the true faith.

As for Master William, he was a man about whom a novel could be written. The friar had first heard of him,

when he was riding around with the *ordu* of Mangu Khan before reaching Karakorum, from a woman named Paquette from Metz in Lorraine, who had been made captive by the Tartars when they invaded Hungary and who belonged to the *ordu* of one of Mangu's wives. She had told Friar William that "there was in Karakorum a master goldsmith named William who was a native of Paris and whose father was called Laurent Buchier." She had heard that he had a brother, Roger Buchier, still living on the Grand Pont in Paris and that he had with him a young man, a very good interpreter, who, he said, was his son. Friar William had a miserable interpreter, who had caused him a great deal of annoyance, so he wrote to the master goldsmith from Paris, asking him if he would send his son to him as interpreter. Master William replied that he could not that month because he was engaged on a certain piece of work for the Great Khan, but that he would send him the next month. Paquette told the friar that Mangu had given Master William "300 *iascot*, which is three thousand marks, and fifty workmen" to do this work.

What this work was Friar William describes with much detail: "At Karakorum Mangu had a great palace, beside the city walls, with a wall around it like monastery walls in our country. Here he holds drinking feasts twice a year; one at Eastertime, when he passes through; the other in summer, on his way back. . . . There are many long buildings there, like barns, where he stores his provisions and his treasures. Within the entrance to the palace Master William the Parisian had made a great tree of silver, with four lions of silver at its roots. And a pipe runs through each lion, and they all pour white mares' milk from their mouths." The "white mares' milk" was the dregs left after making "black mares' milk." The dregs were given to the slaves; while the "black" beverage was reserved for their masters. "Four pipes go inside the tree to the top and there bend down, and there is on each of the four pipes a gilded serpent with its tail wound round the

tree. From one pipe comes wine, from the second black mares' milk, from the third *bal,* which is a drink made from honey, and from the fourth rice wine, which is called *terracina.* And there is, at the foot of the tree, a silver bowl to receive each liquid. Between the four pipes, at the top, he placed an angel with a trumpet, and under the tree a vault large enough to contain a man. And there are pipes from the vault to the angel. At first he had bellows there, but they did not make enough wind to produce any noise. There is a cellar for storing the drinks outside the palace, and the servants stand there waiting to pour them out as soon as the angel blows his trumpet. The tree has silver branches and leaves and fruit also. When it is time to serve the drinks the chief butler commands the angel to trumpet. Then the man in the vault blows as hard as he can into the pipe which leads to the angel, and the angel, lifting the trumpet to his lips, blows loudly. The servants, then, pour the drinks each into its special pipe, and they flow through the pipes into the bowls, the butlers draw it off and carry it to the people in the palace.

"The palace is like a church, with a nave down the middle, and with two aisles marked by two rows of columns. And there are three doors to the south. The tree stands beyond the middle door on the inside, and the Khan sits on a raised place to the north, so that every one can see him. Two sets of steps lead up to this place, and the cupbearer goes up by one and down by the other. The space between the tree and the steps is empty, and there the cupbearer stands, and so do the envoys with their gifts. And the Khan sits enthroned there like a god. On his right are the men, on his left the women. . . . To the south, by the right-hand pillars, are rows of raised seats for his son and his brothers; on the left, in like manner, sit his wives and his daughters. Only one wife sits beside him, and even she is a little lower than he."

This very arrangement of the Khan's court is described by all the travelers. The Khans received envoys and other visitors in just the same way in tent or palace, and the door of the

palace, like that of the tent, faced south. As for the mechanical magic tree made by Master William, it is similar to other contrivances in the courts of Oriental monarchs. Some of the most remarkable were at Constantinople and were described by Crusaders and pilgrims to the people at home. It may even be that Mangu Khan, or Master William, got the inspiration for the tree from that very famous device called the Throne of Solomon which belonged to the Emperor of Con-

The Mechanical Tree

stantinople, and which was described at the beginning of this book.

William Buchier, the master goldsmith who had made this marvelous tree for the Great Khan, was the slave of the Khan's youngest brother. Like William's wife, and many other Europeans who were in the service of the Tartar rulers, he had been captured in Hungary, or what was then Hungary; for they had taken him at Belgrade, the present capital of

Jugoslavia. He had, in fact, belonged to Mangu's mother, and on her death had gone, with all her *ordu*, to her youngest son.

Master William seems to have been delighted to see men from his part of the world, for the friar speaks very warmly of his constant kindness. One thing that he did is particularly interesting. Friar William says: "Then Master William had made for us an iron for making wafers for the communion, and he already had vestments which he had made for himself; for he was not unlearned and acted much like a priest. He had carved an image of the Virgin after the manner of the French, and on the doors enclosing it he had made very fine carvings of the story of the Gospel. Besides this he made a silver box in which to place the bread of the Sacrament, with little recesses in the sides of the box for the relics. He had also made a chapel on a cart, and this, too, was adorned with sacred pictures. I accepted his vestments and blessed them, and we were able to make wafers in the proper way."

The reason why this is especially interesting is that one of the most recent European visitors to the Great Buddhist monastery at Erdenitso, which stands on the site of the ancient city of Karakorum, found in the temple there an iron wafer mold with a cross in it and a silver box. These are probably the very ones which the Parisian goldsmith made for Friar William at the end of his long journey to the court of the Great Khan.

Karakorum has disappeared. There is only a square wall of earth around the present monastery which may be the wall of the old city. Marco Polo says that it was surrounded by a strong earthen wall, as stone was scarce, and that it was only three miles round. Friar William goes into greater detail: "Not counting the Khan's palace, the whole city is smaller than the village of Saint Denis, and the Abbey of Saint Denis is ten times as large as the palace. It has two quarters: that of the Saracens, where the markets are, and that of the Cathayans, who are all artisans. Besides this there are some great

palaces for the court secretaries. And there are twelve idol" (or Buddhist) "temples of different nations, two mosques in which the law of Mohammed is preached, and one Christian church at the very end of the town. The city has a mud wall round it and four gates. At the eastern end they sell millet and other grains, but there is no great supply of it; at the western end they sell sheep and goats; at the southern, carts and oxen; at the northern, horses."

The city of Karakorum must have had a very strange appearance when the Khan stopped there with his household. For, besides the state palaces, there were, it is thought, no houses except in the two foreign quarters, where the Mohammedans and the Chinese lived. The Tartars very likely simply pitched their tents inside the walls when they arrived, and lived in these; and the principal markets were probably outside the gates, as they are in China to-day. They were conveniently placed, for the sheep and horses were brought down from the pastures to the north and west to the northern and western gates; while from Cathay to the south and Manchuria to the east came oxen, carts, and grain.

Karakorum was a real Tartar city. Although the imperial palace seems to have been constructed like a Chinese one, the city had been founded by Okkodai, the son of Genghiz Khan, less than twenty years before Friar William visited it. It was the capital of the vast empire which the Mongols had set up. A year or so after the friar left, Mangu moved the capital to Shandu, on the other side of the desert, to the south. And by the time that Marco Polo went to the court of Kubla Khan, there was still another capital, the splendid city of Cambaluc, or Pekin.

Through all the long journey to Karakorum the travelers went to the south of Siberia. But as they traveled they heard stories of the people living in the far north, and often these stories were quite near the truth. Friar William, for instance, learned that to the north of Karakorum dwelt the Oengai, "who fasten polished bones beneath their feet, on which they

go over the hard snow and on the ice so fast that they can catch birds and animals." These polished bones were a kind of snowshoes, or more probably skis; for the catching of birds and beasts on skis reminds the writer of these lines of a young Alpine villager in France who said that he hunted hares on skis and could easily overtake one going down a steep slope. These Oengai, or Urianghit, according to the Persian historian, Rashiddudin, had no tents, but lived in the woods, keeping no tame cattle, except an animal which looked like a mountain sheep. Instead of tents they made bark huts when they camped. The name, Urianghit, means reindeer, and their "mountain sheep" must certainly have been a reindeer. For Marco Polo, in speaking rather confusedly of the same people, says: "They are a wild race, living by their beasts, most of which are stags, and I tell you that they ride these stags." Modern travelers say that the reindeer of these people, who are called by the Russians Reindeer Tunguses, are much larger and better than those of Lapland, and that they, unlike the Lapland ones, are used for riding as well as for driving and for carrying packs.

If you go still farther north, says Polo, for forty days over a great plain which he calls the Plain of Bargu, you come to some mountains where it is so cold that no man or woman, beast or bird can live there, "except a kind of bird called barguerlac, on which the peregrine falcons feed. They are the size of partridges, and have feet like those of parrots and tails like swallows' tails. They are great fliers." It is thought that these birds are the same as the large pin-tailed sand grouse, which lives in the sandy or grassy plains around Lake Baikal. The only difference is that, instead of parrot-feet, they have feet something like paws. They are in truth "great fliers," for in 1859 some of them appeared in England, and after that kept coming every year in pairs or flocks. The place where these birds are found, according to Polo, is "so far north that the North Star lies behind you toward the south"!

Friar William one day complimented a Buddhist priest,

with whom he was talking at Karakorum, on the beautiful color of his red gown, and asked him where such a dye came from. "And he said that there are, in the lands east of Cathay, high rocks, among which live creatures like human beings, except that they cannot bend their knees and have to jump instead of walking. They are not more than two feet high and are covered with hair. They live in inaccessible caves. The hunters take rice wine with them, and it is very intoxicating, and they hollow out small holes in the rocks and fill them with the wine. Then they hide, and the creatures come out of their caves and taste the drink. Then they cry *Chin*, *chin*; wherefore they are called Chinchin. Then they

The Chinchin

flock there and get drunk and fall asleep. And the hunters bind their feet and hands. Then they open a vein in their necks and take out three or four drops of blood, and let them go. And this blood is very precious for dyeing." Stories very like this are found in Chinese books. The Chinchin, however, is not, in these works, a human being but a "species of gibbon

which has yellow hair and sharp ears and loves wine." They seem also to have had some of the same characteristics as the wild men of the Dsungarian Desert described by Friar John.

Friar William says they also told him a story, which he did not believe, about a land beyond Cathay where a man always remained the age he had when he first entered the country. This may be the land of the Chinese fairy queen, where the peach of immortality grows.

A Chinese Nakkar

CHAPTER V

THE ROAD TO CAMBALUC

To the south of the arduous northern route which we have been following through Asia to Karakorum, lay another road, which Marco Polo took to go to the new Tartar capital of Cambaluc in Cathay. This road, coming out of Persia into Turkestan, passed through the city of Balkh, which lies in the valley of the Oxus, a little to the east of Sapurgan, where they made the dried melons that were "sweeter than honey." Marco says: "Balkh is a great and noble city, and formerly it was much nobler and greater; for the Tartars and other peoples have wasted and destroyed it. And I tell you that there were formerly many fine palaces and marble buildings, but now they are in ruins. And I tell you furthermore that it

was in this city that Alexander took to wife the daughter of Darius." All that Marco says about the condition of Balkh was true, and continued to be so. Ibn Batuta gives a similar description sixty years later. He says there was no one living there and that he could still see the ruins of mosques and colleges and the painted walls. Modern travelers, too, have found about the same conditions. What happened to Balkh was what had happened to so many of the "noble" cities of Asia when the Tartar hordes swept through: Genghiz Khan had put the inhabitants to the sword, set fire to houses and gardens and leveled the stone buildings. The story of Alexander's marriage to the beautiful daughter of Darius, Roxana, is only partially true. He did marry a Roxana, but she was not the daughter of Darius.

After leaving Balkh, Marco went through a mountainous region where there were lions and where the people had all fled to the mountain fastnesses to escape from the bandits and the armies that had made life in houses perilous. The travelers went for perhaps twelve days through this dangerous country and arrived at the market town of Taican, which Marco describes as a "beautiful place," but which is now a miserable hamlet containing a few hundred hovels. To the south of Taican one could see mountains made entirely of salt. "People come from all the countries round, for a distance of thirty days, to get this salt," says Marco, "and it is the best in the world, and so hard that iron picks are necessary to dig it. There is so much that it would suffice for the whole world until the end of time." There are still mines of rock salt in the vicinity of Taican, now called Talikan. On some of the mountains near the town grow wild almonds and pistachios; Marco speaks of these also.

Riding in an easterly direction from Taican through a vine-clad country, the inhabitants of which wore clothing made of skins and, as a headdress, "a cord ten palms long wound round their head," the travelers arrived at a town called Casem, the modern Kishm, built on both sides of a large river. In the

country roundabout they found very large porcupines, which "when hunted with dogs, huddle together and shoot their quills at the dogs, wounding them in many places." Polo was evidently under the same illusion as most of us, in our childhood; for, of course, the porcupine does not shoot its quills but merely bristles when attacked. He noticed another peculiarity of this country: "The peasants who have cattle

Cave Dwellers

live in the mountains, and they have there fine, large houses, for they make caves in them, and this they can do easily because the mountains are of earth." This is still the way in which most of the people of that region live, and it is true that the hills are composed of hardened clay and pebbles.

Somewhere in this vicinity, probably in the Hindu Kush, between here and Kabul, Friar Odoric had a very terrifying ad-

venture, which he describes with all the vividness with which it impressed itself on his imagination. It recalls the gorge of devils through which Friar William rode in the Altai Mountains, and Marco Polo had a similar experience when he crossed the haunted Gobi Desert. Here is Odoric's account:

"A very great and terrible thing I saw as I was traveling along the River of Delights. I approached a valley quite near this river, and as I came up I heard divers sorts of instruments of music, and especially nakkars. The closer I came, the louder did the noise become, until I was filled with fear and terror. This valley is seven or eight miles long, and the people of the country say that if any one go into it he can never come out again. Nevertheless, I went in, in order to find out what this might be. And I found so many dead bodies lying there that no one could believe how many there were. And at one side of the mountain, in a rock, I beheld a human visage, very terrible; so frightful, in fact, that I thought to die of fear, and I said these words: *'Verbum caro factum est,'* And the Word became flesh; etc., from the Gospel of John. I dared not go nearer than eight paces to that face, but climbed out on the other side upon a sandy mountain. I looked all round me but nothing did I hear or see, except a great quantity of silver. I took some of it in my lap but did not carry any away; for I did not want it, and was, besides, afraid that it was some snare to hold me there. I, therefore, threw it all on the ground. And thus I departed. All the Saracens who saw me come forth and who knew that I had been there, paid me great respect and said that I was a baptized and holy man. But those who had perished in that valley they said belonged to the devil."

It is not known just what Odoric means by "the River of Delights," but the Valley of the Corpses which he describes was probably at a place north of Kabul where there are "flowing sands." For it is true that in certain regions which have hills of sand, the falling of the sand as the temperature changes or when it is disturbed by people passing, makes a

sound like that of drums. *Nakkars* were the enormous kettle-drums used by Asiatic monarchs to give the signal for attack in battle. They were so big, indeed, that they had to be carried on elephants, in India, or on camels, among the Tartars. This is not the same as *naker*, which was a kind of horn used in the Middle Ages and imported from North Africa.

It is no wonder that the mysterious sound of moving sands,

An Indian Nakkar

combined with the loneliness of desert places, made frightened wayfarers think that devils were abroad, lurking for their prey. And we must admire Friar Odoric's courage in risking his life, to say nothing of his soul, in the Valley of the Corpses.

All this region of the Hindu Kush is singularly interesting to any one who loves mountain scenery. It is also interesting to any one who cares about natural resources from the com-

mercial point of view. Marco gives, for him, a long description of the province of Badakshan, on the north side of the Hindu Kush. The first thing he says is that the royal family was descended from King Alexander and Roxana, the beautiful but legendary daughter of Darius.

The other things that he says are more interesting, if we are concerned with the truth. He tells us that there is a particular mountain in Badakshan, called Syghinan, where there are Balas rubies, and he adds: "They are found in rocks in the mountains, and I tell you that they dig great caverns in the mountains and go very deep, just as silver miners do. . . . And you must know besides that the king has them dug for himself alone and that any one else who should go there to dig does so on pain of death, as well as of loss of property. For the king sends the rubies to other kings and princes and great lords, either as tribute or in friendship, and some he sells for gold and silver. And the king does this so that his rubies may be very dear; for, if he allowed others to dig them and carry them away, they would extract so many that they would not be worth so much." This king, we see, had a corner on rubies, and it was passed on to his successors down to modern times. But the mines were abandoned, because of their small production, during the last century. They are situated on the shores of the Oxus River. The "Balas" ruby, which means "ruby of Badakshan," is an inferior sort, but it was well known and greatly prized in Marco's time throughout Europe.

Besides the ruby mountain, Badakshan, says Marco, "has another mountain in which lapis lazuli is found, and it is the finest lapis lazuli in the world. . . . And I tell you besides that there are mountains which contain veins of silver, in great abundance." The mines of lapis lazuli, or azure, are, like the ruby mines, century-old, and, like the rubies, the lapis lazuli has grown inferior with time. There are many other natural products, which Marco does not mention, mined in this district: iron, lead, sulphur, etc.; but there is no silver dug today north of the Hindu Kush.

Marco also tells of the remarkably swift horses raised in Badakshan. They were never shod, he says, in spite of the bad mountain roads, but they could go down a steep defile much faster than any other horses. He was told, too, that there had been a breed of horses there that sprang from Alexander's steed Bucephalus, but that it was extinct. Even to-day the horses of Badakshan are famous in that part of Asia.

The Ladies of Badakshan

Among the many products of this fortunate province Marco mentions a species of wild sheep, that went in huge flocks of several hundred; the same, probably, which wanders to-day throughout the Hindu Kush.

Perhaps the reason why Marco found this country so particularly delightful was that it was here that he was cured of an illness which he had had for about a year. He was ad-

vised to visit a great fertile plain on top of the mountains, where the air was remarkably pure and healthful and the brooks were filled with trout. Here he recovered in a few days.

The ladies of Badakshan must have been very perverse creatures, for, according to Marco, although cloth was very scarce there and most of the people dressed in skins, the great ladies wore trousers of cotton containing sometimes as much as a hundred yards of material. They did this, he says, to make their hips look large, as this was thought to be beautiful. They remind us of the hoop-skirt ladies of our grandmothers' time!

"Ten days' journey south of Badakshan," says Polo, "there is a province called Pashai. . . . The people are Idolaters," or Buddhists, "and worship images. They are brown in color, and are versed in enchantments and the diabolic arts. The men wear earrings and brooches of gold and silver and pearls and many other precious stones. They are an evil and crafty race. This province is very hot. The people eat meat and rice." It is not known what the modern name of "Pashai" is. However, there is a region to the south of Badakshan where the people are noted for their untrustworthiness and where they are feared because of their proficiency in magic, and this is probably the place to which Marco refers.

Still farther south, Marco tells us, there is a country called Kashmir, "where the people are Idolaters and know so much of devilish enchantment that it is a marvel. For they can make their idols speak and they can bring about changes in the weather and produce great darkness, and perform other magic acts which are incredible unless you have seen them. And I tell you that they are the chief of all the Idolaters and that idols originated with them. They are brown and thin. The women are very beautiful for brunettes. They eat meat and rice. The climate is temperate. There are a great many cities and villages, with forests and wildernesses and very strong passes. . . . The coral which is brought from our country is sold there more than in any other place."

Marco is, of course, speaking of the land in which lies the beautiful Vale of Kashmir, in the Himalaya Mountains, west of Thibet, and famous in the literatures of East and West. It is almost certain that he did not himself go there, but merely wrote what he was told about it. It did not lie on his route, either going or returning. Yet what information he had is quite accurate. Kashmir was a place of pilgrimage for the Buddhists of the north, and Marco found magicians from Kashmir performing their enchantments far away at the court of Kubla Khan in Cambaluc. The women of this high valley hollowed out of lofty, snow-capped mountains and watered by innumerable streams, have always been famed for their beauty; even in Marco's time, when "brunettes" were not the ideal of Europeans. The character of the people of Kashmir does not, it is said, correspond with their beauty of form. They are very tricky and the men are effeminate. As for the coral, it is true to-day that the inhabitants of the Himalaya Mountains are very fond of it.

"Now," says Marco, "we will leave this part of the country and not go any farther there; for, if we went on, we should enter India, and I do not want to go there just now, because on our return journey I will tell you all about India, in due order. So we shall return to Badakshan, because we can go no other way." We will do as Marco did, and go back to Badakshan.

What our traveler has to tell us next is of particular interest just now because of some of the recent expeditions from our own country into that part of central Asia, and especially because of the exploring expeditions of people of many nations, which preceded these. What the modern explorers have found corroborates Marco's account to a very remarkable degree. Here is what he says:

"When you leave Badakshan you go for twelve days between east and northeast along a river which belongs to the brother of the Lord of Badakshan, and you find several villages and habitations. And at the end of twelve days you come to a

province which is rather small, no more than three days' journey in any direction, and it is called Vokhan. . . . And when you leave this place and go for three days northeast, through mountains all the way, you reach such a height that it is said to be the highest place in the world. There you find a plain between two mountains, and in the plain a very fine river. And here are the best pastures in the world; for a lean beast gets fat here in ten days. There are a great many wild animals of all kinds there, and especially, enormous wild sheep, with horns fully six palms long. And from these horns the shepherds make bowls for eating, and they also enclose the places where they keep their cattle with them. They told Messer Marco that there were many wolves here and that they killed the sheep. And heaps of their horns and bones were visible, which were placed along the road to guide travelers in the snowy season. And one goes through this plain, which is called Pamir, for twelve days, and in all that time one sees neither house nor plant, so that the traveler must carry his provisions

The Ovis Poli

with him. Birds there are none, because of the altitude and the cold that is there. And I tell you that, on account of this great cold, fire is neither so bright nor so hot as in other places, and does not cook things well."

Pamir, which has been called "the Roof of the World," and which is the home of the *Ovis poli*, the great-horned sheep that has been named after Polo, is to-day about as Marco described it in the thirteenth century. It is not known for certain just where his route lay across it, for there are several "Pamirs" in the same mountainous region which he traversed. The word *pamir* is thought to mean the desolate pasture lands at the foot of the high mountain ranges, long, sloping, grass-covered valleys between the ridges. These narrow valleys are often watered by rivers coming down from the glaciers on the lofty mountains. Almost nothing but grass grows there, and snow covers them a large part of the year, for they are from eight thousand to thirteen thousand feet high. Probably Marco went through what is known to-day as Little Pamir. Not long ago we read a great deal about the *Ovis poli* in the newspapers, because an American expedition brought back specimens. They have great curly horns, sometimes as much as five feet long, including the curl, and with a spread of four feet between the tips. One specimen in England has a circumference of well over a foot at the base. There are similar sheep, although not identical, in other parts of Asia; and, as a matter of fact, Polo was not the first European traveler to mention them. Friar William says he had seen some in Tartary with horns so heavy that he could hardly lift a pair of them in one hand.

Marco's observation about the fire is not quite accurate. The foods which could not be cooked so well at that high altitude must have been boiled dishes; for a very high altitude lowers the boiling point of water, and apparently it is impossible to boil food thoroughly above fifteen thousand feet. He was right in saying that the food did not cook so well, but this was not because the fire was not so hot; anything broiled

should have been just as good as if it had been prepared at sea level.

From Pamir the travelers went northeast, still through a wilderness of mountains and valleys, without a house to be seen, or even growing things, although there were many rivers. After perhaps forty days of riding, they came to the city of Kashgar, set in a fertile country of gardens and vineyards, with fields of cotton and beautiful estates. Many merchants

Kashgar

from there traveled all over the world with their wares; but the natives, says Polo, lived most wretchedly. Kashgar has always been a mercantile city, welcoming the traders from India on their way to Tartary or China. It lies at the foot of the Celestial Mountains, on the western border of Chinese Turkestan, forming a sort of oasis between the barrenness of upland pastures and the sandy wastes of the desert below it to the east.

Southeast of Kashgar is the town of Yarkand and Polo tells us that the inhabitants are subject to swellings at the throat, which is due to their drinking-water. It is a fact that goiter is very common there to-day and that it may be caused by bad water. Although Polo does not say so, Yarkand also was an important city for merchants, for the caravans from Kabul changed here and made up new ones to go into Cathay.

Continuing to the southeast, Marco came to the province of Khotan, a prosperous country, famous for its fruits and for its cotton manufactures. Khotan is still the cotton center of Chinese Turkestan, and among its fruits are melons, grapes, and watermelons.

East of Khotan lies the town of Kiria, sometimes mentioned as Pein. This, with Khotan, is the country of jade, which Marco calls jasper and chalcedony. It is found for the most part in the rivers, and may be white, green, red, or black, or even white with red spots or green lined with gold. This jade was sold at Yarkand and the other towns roundabout. South of Yarkand there is a mountain entirely of jade of different colors, but the best quality is on the highest points of the mountain.

At Pein the travelers began to sense the approach of the great sandy Desert of Gobi. The town lay in cultivated land almost on the edge of the sand. The people told of cities buried in the desert farther on; the road leading into the adjoining province, Charchand, and all the way through it, "is sandy, and the water in many places is bitter. Yet there is good, fresh water also. When an army passes through the country the people flee with their wives and their children and their cattle into the sandy desert, for two or three days, to places where they know they will find water and where they can live with their beasts. And I tell you that no one can see whither they have gone because the wind covers their tracks."

"When you leave Charchand," continues Marco, "you go full five days through the sands, where the water is bad and bitter, and then you will find good water. And at the end of

five days you reach a city which is at the beginning of the Great Desert, and where travelers lay in supplies of provisions for crossing the Desert. This city is called Lop and is a large town at the edge of the Great Desert, which is called the Desert of Lop, and lies between east and northeast. . . . And I tell you that those wishing to cross the Desert rest here for a week to refresh themselves and their beasts. Then they take provisions for a month for themselves and their beasts.

"Then they depart from this town and enter the Desert. And I tell you that it is so long that it would take a year, they say, to reach the end of it; and where it is the narrowest it is difficult to cross in a month. It is nothing but hills and valleys of sand, and nothing is found there to eat. But, after traveling a day and a night, you find fresh water, though only enough for fifty or a hundred men with their beasts. And throughout the Desert you must always go a day and a night before you find water. And in three or four places you will find bitter, salty water. There is neither beast nor bird there,

Spirit Voices

for there is nothing for them to eat; but I will tell you of a great marvel that is found there.

"It is true that when travelers are riding at night through this Desert and one happens to lag behind or to get separated from his companions by falling asleep or for any other reason, when he wants to join his companions he will hear spirits talking in such wise that he thinks it is his companions. For they will often call a man by his name, and sometimes they lead him astray so that he never gets back. And thus have many perished. And again, lone travelers will hear a great company of people tramping away from the right road, and they will follow the sound, believing that it is their own caravan. But at daybreak they find that they have been ensnared. Even in the daytime you may hear those spirit voices, and sometimes it will seem to you that you are listening to many musical instruments, and especially to drums. For this reason travelers usually keep close together in this Desert. And they put bells on the necks of all the animals, so that they may not wander. And when it is time to sleep they put up a sign pointing the direction of the next march. And in this manner is the Desert crossed."

Here are the same "drums" or "nakkars" which Friar Odoric heard in the Valley of the Corpses north of Kabul, in the region of the Hindu Kush. Here are the spirits or demons carrying off travelers, which Friar William exorcised in the Gorge of the Devils in the Altai Mountains on the northwest side of the Gobi. One of the most favored haunts of demons was the Gobi Desert, that vast sea of sand stretching from Lop to Cambaluc and up to Karakorum in the north. Known in parts of China as the "Singing Sands," the mysterious desert, filled with strange voices and visions, held so many terrors for travelers that they would often take a longer route that circled it, rather than risk the perils of the sands.

The Gobi Desert was mysterious and terrible in other ways. For its sands were "flowing" as well as "singing." In the vicinity of Lop, towns, rivers, and lakes migrate as the sands

drive them this way and that. The "Lop" of Marco Polo is no longer there, unless it be one of various half-buried and ruined settlements which have been discovered by modern explorers. Lob Nor, a lake near "Lop" which Marco does not speak of and probably did not see, but which is mentioned by other old travelers, is very difficult to locate; for even the lakes of the desert will vanish within a very few years, while others appear somewhere else. Modern explorers have fought about Lob Nor; for, where one would discover a lake, another, going out a few years later, would find only some shallow pools of water. The Gobi, with its shifting sands and spirit voices, has given us one of the most haunting of the pictures drawn by the old travelers.

After traveling for a month through the Great Desert the wayfarers came to a thickly populated region, "the great province of Tangut." Here they found many important cities and other very interesting things. Here the life began to take on a Chinese tinge, for the first time in their long journey. After the terrors of the desert they reached a beautiful city built in an oasis, near a rumbling sandhill, and filled with Buddhist temples. The name of this city is to-day, as it was in Marco's time, Shachow.

Some days farther east they found the city of Suhchow. Over all the mountains round about it grows a very valuable plant, a variety of rhubarb, the root of which has been used extensively throughout the East for medicine; and merchants came from far and near, says Marco, to buy it.

The next city of importance was Campichu, the modern Kanchow, the capital of the province of Tangut. Marco had lived in this city for a whole year, when he was on a mission for the Great Khan Kubla, and the thing that seems to have impressed him most was the gigantic images of Buddha which he saw there. Here is his description of them: "There is a great number of idols, and I tell you that there are some ten paces long. One will be of wood, another of clay, another of stone. They are all covered with gold and of fine work-

manship. The great idols are lying down, and there are several other small images around the large one and they seem to be worshiping it." Friar William, and King Hayton of Armenia also, speak of colossal images like these, which they had seen or heard of in Cathay and Tartary. Friar William says he was told of one in Cathay which was so huge that it could be seen two days away. Those that Marco Polo mentions have been unearthed. The reason why Buddha is represented lying down is that he is supposed to be entering Nirvana.

The great idols are lying down

To the north of Suhchow and Campichu was the city of Etzina, whose ruins to-day show that it was once a wealthy town with large buildings. It was important, for from here the caravans set out, bound for Karakorum on the other side

of the Great Desert, where wild asses roamed. Etzina was also, in Marco's time, a military center of the Great Khan. The direct route from here to Karakorum is no longer used, but there are some traces of it left, to show where the old travelers took their way.

But we have already been to Karakorum by the northern road. If we expect to reach the Khan's great city of Cambaluc with Marco Polo we must go back to Campichu with its giant idols and travel in a southeasterly direction, through a region "where there are many spirits, which the traveler will frequently hear speaking in the night." After five days of this, he would come to the city of Erguiul, which is now called by the Chinese Liangchow. From Erguiul two roads branched out into Cathay, one to the northeast, leading to Cambaluc; the other toward the southeast, by way of the city of Sinju, or Siningfu.

Marco, who had traveled through Tangut, and Friar William, who had heard about it from other travelers, give some very interesting details about the inhabitants of the province, both beasts and men. Marco says that in the country round Sinju "there are wild cattle which are as big as elephants and very fine to look at. They are all covered with hair except on the back, and they are black and white. This hair is three palms long. And they have domesticated many of these cattle, for they catch the wild ones when young. And they also cross them with ordinary cattle and the crossed ones are marvelous animals, much better for work than others. And they use them as beasts of burden and for plowing, and they are so strong that they will do twice as much plowing as other cattle." The giant cattle are those strange beasts called yaks, which, until quite recently, were not known to modern Europeans except by hearsay. The wild yaks, especially the males, are very terrifying animals. A European traveler, toward the end of the last century, shot twenty of them in this very region round Sinju. One was eleven feet long, not counting the tail, which

measured three feet. The beast stood six feet high. Marco Polo exaggerated somewhat when he said they were as big as elephants. Yaks are of various colors: some are black, some black and white, some white, or brown. The tame yaks, many of which are, as Marco states, crossed with ordinary cattle, are not so handsome or so huge as the wild ones, but they are very strong, carrying, on an average, two hundred

The tame yaks are not so handsome

and fifty pounds. The wild bull yaks are the terror of the natives, and stories are told of how they will use horns and hoofs, and, if that fails, tongues, to annihilate their assailants. It has been said that a wild yak will toss a man into the air with its tongue or strip off his skin by licking him!

Friar William gives a very vivid description of the tame yaks, some of which he had evidently seen at Karakorum—for they are used throughout Mongolia: "These people" (the Tanguts) "have very strong cattle, which have hairy tails, like horses, and hair on their backs and bellies. Their legs are

not so long as those of cattle, but they are much stronger than cattle. They draw the great tents of the Mongols. And their slender, long, curving horns are so sharp that their points have to be cut off. The cows will not give milk unless they are sung to. These beasts are like bulls, for, if a man have on red, they will attack him to kill him."

Marco Polo, after describing the yaks of Tangut, continues: "And in this country is found the best and finest musk in the world. And I will tell you how they procure this musk. There is in this place a small beast the size of a gazelle. It has hair like a stag's, but very coarse, feet and tail like a gazelle, no horns, but four tusks, two below and two above, full three fingers long and slender. It is a beautiful animal. The musk is procured in this manner: when the animal has been caught, a sack full of blood is found in the belly between the flesh and the skin; this is cut out along with the skin. And the blood inside is the musk which produces such a strong perfume. And you may know that in that country there is a great quantity of it." All that Marco says is perfectly correct, except that the animal he describes has only two tusks, which are on the upper jaw.

In this country, also, Marco says there are enormous pheasants, "as large as peacocks, or a little smaller, and with tails from seven to ten palms in length." This is probably the Chinese pheasant known as "Reeves's Pheasant," which may have a tail six or seven feet long. Reeves's Pheasant, however, is much smaller than a peacock.

Of the people of this country, Marco says: "They are fat, with little noses and black hair. They have no beard, except for a few hairs on the upper lip. The women are very pretty."

If, instead of going south to Sinju; the traveler wished to go by the road to Cambaluc, he would come to the city of Calachan, the summer residence of the kings of Tangut, at the foot of the Alashan Mountains; a city famous for its fine cloth woven of white camel's hair, "which the merchants bear

to many parts and to Cathay and elsewhere throughout the world."

On leaving the province of Tangut the travelers entered Tenduc, whose ruler, according to Marco Polo, "is of the lineage of Prester John. His name is George, and he rules his land under the Great Khan; although not all that Prester John held, but only a part thereof. . . . And you must know that in this province was the capital city of Prester John when he ruled over the Tartars, and over all those provinces and kingdoms roundabout. And his descendants still live there. And this George whom I mentioned is of the lineage of Prester John, and the sixth king since Prester John."

Prester John, which means Priest John, is one of the most mysterious and elusive figures in medieval history. It is even very hard to place him in history at all, because so many legends have been woven around his name. Prester John was supposed to be at once a Christian priest and king who ruled over a vast and wealthy empire. It was a movable empire. At one moment it was in India; then it is found in Cathay; and suddenly it is transported to Abyssinia on the coast of Africa. In the time of our travelers it was believed that Prester John had ruled in the Far East. It had been said that he was a great conqueror from India, whose armies had swept westward into Persia and would have come to take Jerusalem away from the Saracens and restore it to the Christians. Then, when Genghiz Khan began his war of conquest, people said that he was the son or grandson of the great Prester John. A little later on, travelers like Marco Polo and Friar William tried to discover the truth about this, and a new Prester John was found. Marco says he was Unc Khan, the leader of the tribe of the Kerait to the north of Karakorum, that he had been first an ally and then the arch enemy of Genghiz Khan, and that he had died fighting that mighty conqueror, in the plains of Tenduc. Friar William tells somewhat the same story. Friar John gives an account of a

battle in which Prester John defeated his Tartar enemies by a very elaborate stratagem: The priest-king had some bronze men made, and in the battle these were set up on the horses in front of the real warriors. Inside the bronze effigies a fire was built, and the men behind were equipped with bellows, with the help of which, and with something which they threw into the fire, they made such a dense cloud of smoke that the enemy could not see them and were easily routed.

What the practical merchant, Marco Polo, and the observant friar, William of Rubruquis, learned of Prester John, when they reached the Far East, must have been somewhat disillusioning. In fact, the friar says that the half of what had been related of him was not true. This is easy to explain; for the Prester John whose descendants Marco found in Tenduc, was not the great Prester John who was reported to have ruled over India more than a century before Marco's journey to Cathay; the Prester John who had sent, supposedly, a very boastful letter to the Pope, in which he gave a full account of his immense empire, that included within its borders all the wonders of the East, and then asked a few small favors of the Pope.

There were throughout Asia colonies of those Nestorian Christians, who were not orthodox maybe, but who were Christians, after all. And the Tartar Khans, although they were, with few exceptions, butchers in war, were very tolerant in the matter of religion: they received Buddhist, Mohammedan, and Christian at their courts with equal cordiality. These facts all helped the legend of Prester John to grow, and led the Christians of the West to believe that the Great Khan was a Christian, too, or was on the verge of being converted. The spirit of Prester John beckoned to Pope and friar, the glory of Prester John's vast empire helped to lure merchants into the East. When they reached their destination they did not find, perhaps, exactly what they had been led to expect; on the other hand, they very likely were not disappointed with what they did find. How Prester John

happened to change into the antagonist of Genghiz Khan cannot be explained with accuracy. The quality which distinguishes this medieval king is that he hovers like a ghost over the East, ready to enter the body of any potentate. Perhaps his later transference to Africa was caused by the fact that in the Middle Ages the term "Ethiopia" was used for India as well as for Abyssinia. He may even have begun his wanderings in Africa instead of in Asia. There is no more confused and no more alluring tale than that of the chameleon-like Prester John.

As for Marco's King George, we learn more of him from John of Montecorvino, who was Bishop of Cambaluc a little after Marco's return home. John of Montecorvino knew this King George well, for he converted him from the Nestorian to the True Faith, and the pious king, after taking orders, built a Roman church in his own country.

"Here, too," says Marco, still speaking of Tenduc, "is the place which we call in our country 'Gog and Magog.'" Gog and Magog we shall meet again later on; but what Marco seems to be referring to here is the Great Wall of China, which ran just south of the "Land of Prester John." It seems strange that the traveler does not say more about this great wall.

Before we come to the imperial city of Cambaluc, the end of the long journey to Cathay, there is one more excursion to take, to the summer palace of Kubla Khan at Shandu. Kubla built palaces in many places near his favorite city, palaces which he was in the habit of visiting at different times, according to the season or to the particular form of entertainment in which he wished to indulge.

Leaving the city of Sindachu, and riding three days toward the north, one comes, says Marco, to the city of Chagan-nor, or White Pool, where Kubla had recently built a palace. Kubla Khan was particularly fond of hunting, so he had placed this palace in a country of lakes and rivers, which were filled with waterfowl. And in the plains around were partridges

and pheasants and cranes. Marco mentions five different kinds of cranes, some of which are very difficult to identify. Some are very big, and some are red and black and white, and one kind has long red and black feathers hanging at its ears. Kubla Khan's way of hunting birds was by no means the laborious method of modern hunters. For the hunters of the Middle Ages, whether Asiatic or European, would not think of going on foot. And of course they did not have rifles. The medieval hunter rode out with a falcon or some other tame bird of prey on his wrist, and the falcon caught his game for him.

The Great Kahn always hunts on four elephants

Marco Polo has a whole chapter describing the Great Khan's manner of hunting, which seems to us a very silly sort of sport indeed. He says: "The Great Khan is always borne by four elephants, in a fine chamber built of wood and lined on the inside with cloth of beaten gold" (a sort of cloth which may be seen in the Orient to-day) "and covered outside with lions' skins; for, on account of his gout, the Emperor always travels thus. And he always has with him twelve of

his best gerfalcons, and several barons ride beside him to keep him company. And if some of the barons say, 'My Lord, there go some cranes!' he has the covering of his chamber removed, so that he may see the cranes. Then he releases one of his gerfalcons, which sometimes catches its prey, as the Khan looks on from his couch, and this is indeed a great diversion and immense delight to him, as well as to the barons who are riding round him.

"And rest assured that there never has been, nor do I think that there is in the world a man who enjoys himself as much as he, or who has the power to do so."

There is another palace all of cane

This brings us, after "three days' riding between north-east and north" to a "city which is called Shandu." This is the "Xanadu of Kubla Khan" about which Coleridge wrote, because, after reading Marco's account of the summer palace there, he had a vision of the "stately pleasure-dome,"

> Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
> Through caverns measureless to man,
> Down to a sunless sea.

Marco's account is much more prosaic than Coleridge's imagination of it, but we can see how even it would fire the fancy of a poet.

"In this city Kubla Khan built an immense palace of marble and stone. The halls and chambers are all gilded. It is marvelously beautiful and decorated with paintings of men and animals, of birds and trees and flowers of exquisite workmanship. And around this palace is a wall enclosing a space of sixteen miles, in which are fountains and streams and level places. And the Great Khan keeps all manner of beasts here. . . . And sometimes he rides through this park with a leopard on his horse's croup, and when he wishes to take a stag or a roebuck, he slips his leopard at it, and has it fed to his gerfalcons which he has in mew. And he does this for his amusement.

"And in a wood in this park the Khan has built another palace all of cane, which is gilded and beautifully finished on the inside. It has columns gilded and lacquered, with a gilt dragon whose tail is fastened to the column and whose head and outspread claws support the roof. The roof, too, is made of canes, covered with a varnish which withstands the worst rain. The canes are full three palms round and from ten to fifteen paces long. They are cut in lengths, at each joint, and these pieces are split, so that they are like hollow tiles. Each tile must be nailed down so that the wind will not get under it. . . . And the Great Khan had it constructed in such a way that it can be taken down and put up again whenever he wishes. And it is held steady by more than two hundred cords of silk."

It is no wonder that Coleridge thought of "Xanadu" as a place of magic, for here the Great Khan had his Bakhshi, or weather conjurers, to drive away storms by their magic arts. Polo says that they were from Kashmir and Thibet, in the Himalaya Mountains, the land of sorcery. And he tells of other enchantments which they performed: when the emperor wished to drink, they could make the cups move of their own

accord to Kubla's hand! More than ten thousand people, says Marco, were often there to witness this.

All that is left of the summer palace of Kubla Khan, with its park and its movable pavilion of lacquered and gilded cane, with its trained leopards and its gerfalcons, and its necromancers from the Vale of Kashmir or the Buddhist community at Thibet, is a vestige of lonely ruins in a desolate country. It is not so with that other city of the Great Khan—Cambaluc—to which we have come at last.

CHAPTER VI

OF THE GREAT CITY OF CAMBALUC

When the travelers found themselves in the great city of Cambaluc, the capital of the Mongol emperors of China, it was already a very ancient city. Its records go back to at least 200 B. C., when it was the capital of the kingdom of Yen. In olden times it was called Yenking and Yuchow. Today it is still a great capital; we know it under the name of Pekin.

All of the thirteenth and fourteenth century travelers thought it a wonderful city for its size and magnificence. Yet in our days of great engineering feats this city seems even more remarkable than it did to them. We have all heard or seen something of what was done after the Chicago fire or the San Francisco earthquake, and we still get news, from time to time, of the building that is being done to put in order the devastated towns of France and Belgium. All of this represents a great effort and great expense, as we know. But no single undertaking of our times quite outdoes what was accomplished by the builders of Cambaluc; and the present-day Pekin, for those who know its history, will seem to be one of "the Seven Wonders of the World."

Marco Polo set out on his travels in 1271. Eight years before that date the city of Cambaluc, as he found it, did not exist. The ancient city of Yenking was there, as it had been from time immemorial. But when Marco arrived, Yenking was only a part—and a very small part—of Cambaluc; and it was not the part that could arouse his admiration or our own. It is evident enough that the Mongol and Chinese

builders had done a vast piece of work in an incredibly short time.

What had happened was this: the region of Yenking—like our own region of the Potomac about a century and a quarter ago—was chosen as the site of a new capital. The territory was conquered by Genghiz Khan in 1215. Kubla Khan, his successor, chose Yenking as his residence in 1264; in 1267 he built a new capital there.

What Marco and the others found, when they arrived, was a tremendous center of population, fortified by great walls and a moat, with streets regularly laid out, like those of a modern American city, and with palaces, temples, and gardens such as they had never seen before.

There was a rumor abroad that Kubla had suspicions that the inhabitants of the old Chinese city of Yenking were inclined to start a rebellion against the Mongol invaders. He, therefore, had the idea of building the new city near by and of forcing part of the Yenking Chinese to move over into it so that his officers could keep a better watch upon them. That may explain, in part, why he laid out the new section on a regular plan and with broad streets running at right angles to each other; an insurrection would be more easily stopped in such a town than in one made up of many narrow and winding streets.

The old city of Yenking must have been for the most part a great collection of poor and badly built hovels. The story goes that Kubla moved only a part of its inhabitants into the new district, since Taidu—that was the name that was given to it—was not large enough for all of them. Probably, when the inhabitants of the old city were moved over into the new one the badly built part of Yenking was torn down and rebuilt into new suburbs.

The travelers do not all tell us exactly the same tale about the size and peculiarities of Cambaluc. But generally they make it out to be somewhat larger than the modern Pekin. Whether they were merely mistaken or whether Cambaluc

A Gate in Taidu

really was larger is hard to say. But they agree that Taidu was the central walled city and that around this there were a number of large suburbs. Among them was Yenking, which was not then entirely walled. Later on it was well fortified; but most of the suburbs never were.

The descriptions of the regions of Yenking and Taidu, taken together, tally pretty closely with the dimensions of the present city of Pekin. Taidu was about four or five miles long and a little less in breadth, while Yenking was about two miles by six.

In Taidu the main streets ran north and south, and the three principal ones had gates at each end. It was said that these streets were so broad and so straight "that you could see right along them from one gate to the other." Over each of these six gates, and forming a part of it, was a building so large that it was referred to as a "palace." There were four additional "palaces" at the corners of the wall of Taidu, as well as others over the gates of streets that ran east and west. In reality these buildings were arsenals where military supplies were kept and where the guard for each gate, to the number of a thousand soldiers, was mustered for police duty.

Marco says that the emperor was so powerful that he did not keep these soldiers to repulse an enemy, and that their duties were to serve as the imperial guard and city police force. He adds that there were twelve gates in the wall around Taidu, although now there are only nine. But even nine gates, each with as many soldiers as he mentions, would give a police force of nine thousand men to the district of Taidu alone; and there must have been many other smaller stations in Yenking and the other suburbs. If we compare these figures with those of the largest cities of our own time we must conclude that Cambaluc was one of the best policed that the world has seen.

In the center of Taidu there was a tower where a great bell was struck at a certain hour of the night. "And when this bell has sounded thrice none may be abroad in the city," says Marco. But he adds that those who are after a physician

may go out, so long as they carry a lantern. Back in Europe, too, in the Middle Ages and later, there were city regulations that forced any who walked the streets at night to carry some sort of light that could be seen at a distance. The light need not be a very bright one, for street lamps were almost unknown and even a small candle flame would be visible far away along the streets. The purpose of the law was not at all to keep the pedestrian from stumbling or hitting his head on a wall, but to attract the attention of the guard, whose duty it was to see to it that the light did not go out in any strange or sudden manner. Under such circumstances a murderer or a thief would think twice before attacking any one in the streets. In Taidu the patrols were composed of from thirty to forty soldiers each.

The bell tower that told people when they must go indoors or carry lights is no longer standing. But a Chinese historian says that "in the year 1272 the bell tower and the drum tower were erected in the center of the capital"; and the drum tower may still be seen in Pekin.

There were more people in the suburbs than in the walled city itself, according to some accounts. There were twelve of these suburbs, each of them stretching out toward the country some three or four miles from the walls. In Marco's time they were so well built up that he says there were as many fine houses to be seen in them as in Taidu and Yenking. Pekin is no longer divided into twelve suburbs; but it continued to be for many centuries.

In the suburbs were to be found most of the foreign merchants who came to trade in Cambaluc. They came from the ends of the earth; some were Arabs from the Levant, some were Persians, some from the many lands of India, from Burma, from Java, or Sumatra. Others again came from the cold regions that bordered on the Land of Darkness, into which only the Tartars dared to go to get the skins of polar animals. Probably some, too, were Russians from the west, and, along with these, Dutch or Scandinavian or German

traders. Sometimes an adventurous Greek from Constantinople might probably be seen among them, for we know that from away back in the great days of the Roman Empire there had been commerce between Europe and China; and the traders from the Eastern Roman Empire of Constantinople must have taught the route to their descendants of the thirteenth century. We know that Marco's father and an uncle had made the trip before him, on a merchants' venture, to the region northwest of Cambaluc, where the imperial Mongol court was held before Kubla built Taidu.

These foreign merchants brought in every sort of produce imaginable and in return for it they filled their caravans or ships with silk, porcelain, lacquer work, and other wares. Two hundred cities lay round about Cambaluc, so we may imagine that the foreigners could find in the warehouses of its suburbs about anything that China and Mongolia had to offer.

Sometimes merchants or other visitors at Cambaluc were assigned to special lodgings by order of the court or of some official. But the general custom was for them to live in special inns. There were many of these in Cambaluc and some of them are described as very fine and large buildings. There were many for the subjects of the emperor, for the Chinese seem to have been very fond of dining together in public places. But the inns for the foreign merchants were special ones, each set apart for a particular nation. Marco, in telling about these inns, mentions a European custom that was the same as the Chinese. "A special inn is given to each kind of people," he says, "just as we should say that there is an inn for the Lombards, another for the Germans, and a third for the French." In Europe, in fact, this division of hotels among various nationalities was the custom at that time and long after, in great cities that could support many of them and that received foreign visitors. In Cambaluc we may think of some of these foreign inns as having warehouses attached to them. In this way they were not hotels only, but centers for trading

in certain kinds of goods. They were to be found everywhere throughout the suburbs.

What all this meant was a very great commerce. And it must have been a picturesque sight to see it carried on. Even to-day all nations have not abandoned striking national costumes; then, every nation, even in Europe, had its own particular garb by which it might be distinguished at once. In the distant Orient, and especially in a place where the tropical nations and those of the polar regions came together to trade, the contrasts of costume and feature must have been very striking.

How great was the commerce of Cambaluc we may imagine when we are told that a thousand cartloads of silk, to speak of none of the other wares, were brought into the city every day of the year. "We need not wonder at this," Marco wrote, "for there is no flax in these regions and so everything must be made of silk. In some parts of the country, it is true, there are cotton and hemp, but not enough for the needs of the people. This does not matter, though, since silk is so plentiful and cheap. . . ."

Kubla Khan built Cambaluc to be his capital, and so one of his first tasks was to plan a palace. The palace was completely built by the time our thirteenth century travelers arrived in Cambaluc, and they all refer to it as a most wonderful collection of buildings. It was erected near the center of Taidu.

Around the entire space ran a fortified wall. The south or front part of this wall had in it five gates, four of them open to those who were admitted into the palace grounds, and the fifth, or center gate, always closed except to the emperor himself. On this wall there were eight "palaces," or arsenals, like those put up on the outer wall of Taidu. The military stores that were kept in these eight arsenals were allotted in a curious manner, for in one only bridles were kept, in another only saddles, in another only bows, "and so on in succession right round."

Inside this wall was a second one, also with five gates in the south side, like the first. Like it, too, this inner wall had a single gate in each of the three other sides, and eight arsenals.

Inside this wall, at last, was to be found the imperial palace. Brother Odoric says that "this palace is the handsomest and the richest one in the world"; and Marco—perhaps forgetting his ancient history when he saw it—tells us that we "must know that it is the greatest palace that ever was!" On the north it touched the enclosing wall. On the south there was an open square.

The whole outer palace was pitched up on high marble foundations, with broad marble steps leading to each of the four entrances. The foundations were built sloping back toward the center of the palace as they rose, and the real palace wall was set in so as to leave a walk running around the top of the foundations. This walk was protected with a balustrade.

The palace proper seemed unusual to the Europeans because, unlike most buildings in the West, it was not constructed with one story above another, but was spread out over the ground. The palace was very lofty, however, because of the great height of this single story. And if the way of building seemed strange to the men from Europe it did not appeal to them as less beautiful on that account. "No man on earth could design anything superior to it," Marco says.

The roof was of glazed or lacquered tiles colored yellow, green, vermilion, blue, and other tints besides, all shining "like crystal" in the sun, so that they could be seen at a great distance. And this roof was so strongly built that Marco says "it is fit to last forever."

Inside, everything was resplendent with gold, silver, precious stones, and decorations of varying colors. Some of the walls were covered with gold and silver, while others were hung with leather. Friar Odoric particularly admired the leather hangings of a great pillared hall. These hangings were red, he says, and, according to rumor, "in the whole world there

are to be found no nobler hides" than those of which these wall hangings were made. Jean d'Outremeuse, or whoever wrote the "Book of Sir John Mandeville," tells a little more about these hides; if he did not, we might find it hard to understand Friar Odoric's enthusiasm for them. This is what Jean d'Outremeuse has to say:

"And within the palace in the hall there be twenty-four pillars of fine gold and all the walls be covered within of red skins of beasts that men call panthers, that be fair beasts and well smelling, so that on account of the sweet odor of those skins no bad air may enter into the palace. Those skins be as red as blood, and they shine so brightly against the sun that it is hard to look at them. And many folk worship those beasts whenever they see them for their great virtue and for the good smell that they have; and those skins they prize more than if they were plate of fine gold."

The leather hangings in the emperor's palace were no doubt real enough. But Jean d'Outremeuse's idea that they were made from panther hides brings us back again suddenly into the realm of fable and magic that always lay so close to the path of medieval wayfarers. Jean d'Outremeuse had read somewhere that panthers have a sweet odor. For that was a legend that was kept going by the writers who described the wonders of the animal kingdom in those days. Vincent of Beauvais was one of the natural historians who said so; and since Vincent of Beauvais was widely read it may have been from him that Jean d'Outremeuse got his idea. One thing is certain: that some traveler said that these leather hangings in the Khan's palace had an agreeable perfume. Another thing is almost as certain: that the Russian merchants had brought in some of the sweet-smelling leather to which their country gave its name, and which we still use for bookbinding. This leather is prepared with a beech oil which is very aromatic; and brilliant red has always been a favorite dye for it. So we may remember the panthers only as a pleasant myth, and think of the Khan's hall as hung in Russia leather.

The palace seems to have been full of mechanical marvels. One was a fountain in the great banqueting hall. This hall was said to be large enough to accommodate six thousand people at dinner. At such feasts the fountain was a great attraction, for four different sorts of drink issued from it through as many golden winged serpents. When the beverage gushed forth, the serpents, by a concealed mechanism, would flap their wings; but no human being was to be seen at the fountain except those who came to carry away the drink to the ones who were at table. Then there were automatic birds of various kinds that sang and moved their wings, trees of gold whose metal leaves would rustle softly as though in a breeze, and many more wonders of that sort. The men from the West had to admit that the Chinese were a very clever people indeed. And in this the Chinese seem to have agreed with them perfectly; for an old saying of theirs was reported which was to the effect that in most parts of the world men are blind, that in Europe men see out of one eye, but that in China men see with both eyes! Yet one of the Mongol emperors employed a man from the West who must have seen out of both eyes as well as a Chinese; he was William, the goldsmith of Karakorum, the inventor of the fountain there. One suspects that the fountain of Taidu was the identical one that William had built for Mangu Khan at Karakorum. The Polos, too, once built for the Khan some artillery far more powerful than any that had been seen in the East up to their time.

Between the two walls that enclosed the palace, all the ground was set out in shrubs, flowers, and trees. There were running streams and lakes stocked with all kinds of fish; and where the water flowed from the palace grounds a metal grillework was set to keep the fish from getting away. There were ornamental bridges and stone walks, raised somewhat above the level of the ground so that the people could go into the gardens in rainy weather without finding mud in their path. All sorts of the most beautiful animals roamed through this

park. In one part of it wild beasts were kept, and sometimes hunting parties were gotten up to pursue them, when the Khan would stand and look on from his palace.

"About a bow-shot off," to the north of the palace, was a most curious and beautiful hill. It was an artificial hill. It was entirely green and so called the Green Mount. "In good sooth, 'tis named well!" Marco wrote, and we have to agree with him if we are to believe what was said of it. For not only was it entirely covered with verdure, but the very earth itself was green. Some say that this hill was made of the earth that was taken out to form the artificial lakes in the imperial park. But there is another and more interesting version of that—a Chinese one—which will be given in a moment. When the hill had been made, the emperor ordered that the most beautiful specimens of trees that stay always green should be planted upon it. Some of these were probably already fully grown when they were transplanted, for the imperial gardeners—like all Chinese, down to our own time—were very skillful horticulturists. Besides, the emperor used elephants for such work, and the weight of a grown tree, even with the earth attached to its roots, could well be moved by such beasts working with proper apparatus. When the hill was as completely covered as possible the earth itself was thickly strewn with a green substance—probably what is called "blue-stone," or carbonate of copper, which turns green with exposure to damp.

The Chinese version of how the hill was built is this: They call it, among other names, the "Mei-Shan," or "Coal-Mountain," and the story is that the hill was really made of coal. They say—or used to say, at any rate—that the Khan piled up all this quantity of fuel to be used in case the city of Cambaluc should ever be besieged. If he did, he proved himself a very clever engineer and landscape gardener combined, for he knew how to make something beautiful out of an ugly necessity. The travelers have a good deal to say

about the coal of China; but they do not talk about it especially in connection with the Green Mount.

Those were the principal wonders to be seen in Cambaluc; and of course, of all of these, the very city itself was the most wonderful, considering how rapidly it had been rearranged and rebuilt by Kubla Khan. Even to-day such a feat as that hardly has its equal. We sometimes build up a magnificent exposition-city almost overnight, as it seems; but the magnificence of such places is not very real, for everything is flimsily built and must be pulled down again after a year or so. But the streets, the walls, and the palaces of Cambaluc are still standing, and seem likely to stand for thousands of years more in the modern Pekin. As Marco said, it is "fit to last forever." Pekin is perhaps the most remarkable of all cities that have been built to a plan drawn up beforehand.

But such cities were by no means unheard-of in past times. Herodotus tells us that the ancient city of Babylon was planned in this way; and modern archæologists, digging in the ruins of that city, have found evidence that it was. For the regularity of walls and streets—running at right angles, like those of Cambaluc—would have been impossible without foresight.

Alexander the Great set up more than one such city, the chief among them being the Mediterranean port of Alexandria. There, too, scholars have found plenty of evidence to prove the truth of what the ancient historians tell us about the careful planning of the city.

The Romans had strict army regulations about the way in which a camp should be set up: it was to be rectangular, like a modern American city, or like Babylon or Cambaluc. Often these camps remained in one place for many years, and then it was necessary to substitute permanent structures for the tents and to supplement the shallow breastworks with a strong wall. When the soldiers were finally withdrawn a city would be found in the place of a temporary camp. Many such cities

still exist throughout Europe and in North Africa and the Levant. Perhaps the best example is the Italian city of Turin. There the center of the town stands on the ground once occupied by the old Roman camp; its streets run at right angles, as regularly as the divisions of a chessboard, and the newer quarters, as they have been gradually built up, have been planned on the same model.

After those times, and exactly five centuries and five years before Kubla Khan planned Taidu, a certain Moslem potentate, the Calif Mansur, planned and started building a royal quarter in the city of Bagdad. Unlike Taidu of Cambaluc, this royal quarter of Bagdad was perfectly circular in shape. In it were the Calif's palace, the administration buildings, arsenals, and parks. In 1258, or just nine years before Taidu was built, a Mongol general, Hulagu, who happened to be Kubla Khan's own brother, took Bagdad and the "Round City" by force of arms. Hulagu no doubt related to his brother what a remarkable district he had found within the walls and outer city of Bagdad; and who knows but that this model may have suggested to Kubla the planning of Taidu, although after another fashion?

In the days of our travelers, model cities were springing up very rapidly all over the south of France and in England. King Louis IX of France had set the fashion in building the new town of Carcassonne around the old fortress there and in planning the port town of Aiguesmortes on the Mediterranean. While King Edward I of England and his successors were sovereigns of the French territories of Aquitaine and Anjou, they established no fewer than fifty new cities, all of them regularly planned and built in regions that, before, had been farms or waste land. In Great Britain they built as many more, the most of them in the war-racked marches of Wales.

But none of these facts took away anything from the wonder of Cambaluc in the minds of the travelers. And there is

no reason why it should have done so, for what they found in the East was so much larger and so much more magnificent than the new towns of their own age in Europe that no comparison could be made between them. And the great ancient cities of Babylon and Alexandria bore little similarity, in the thirteenth century, to what they had been in the distant past.

The Great Wall of China

CHAPTER VII

CATHAYAN MARVELS

Marco Polo stayed many years in the service of the Mongol emperor, and he must have been in Cambaluc more than the other European travelers of his day. But Friar Odoric was there for three years, and we know of others of that day who lived a long time in the city. These residents of Cambaluc have much to say also of the regions that lay round about.

North of Cambaluc there was a mysterious and terrible region. It was not so far north as the Land of Darkness, or at least the part mentioned by the travelers was not, for it seems to have lain only a few hundred miles from the city. This was the Land of Gog and Magog. The very name of it was terrifying enough to the ears of Europeans, who probably had no distinct idea of who Gog and Magog were, but who always thought of those mysterious beings as the very incarnation of evil. There was no harm to be feared from them

any more, for the story ran that in ancient times King Alexander the Great of Macedonia had shut them up. The story was heard by travelers long before they reached Cambaluc; we shall meet with it in the legend that was told, around the Caspian Sea, about the Iron Gate. Here in Cathay the tribes of Gog and Magog were not merely shut in by a gate: an immense wall had been built, and behind this they must stay forever.

Doubtless the Chinese and Mongols had heard of Alexander the Great, for his conquests had reached to the extreme Orient, and their ancestors or peoples with whom they were in contact must have fought against him here and there along his route to India. But there can hardly have been any Mongol or Chinese legend like the one reported by the Europeans, for the Orientals must have known very well that Alexander never led his troops so far to the north. Those who have made a study of the languages of the Orient have come to the conclusion that the European travelers probably heard certain words that resembled "Gog" and "Magog" in sound and that, not knowing exactly what these words meant, they thought that they referred to the old legend of Alexander. These Oriental words were perhaps the names given to the two divisions of the Tartar race—the Turks and the Mongols. In early times the Turks had lived in these northern regions, just as the Mongol ancestors of Kubla Khan had done. And history tells us that the Great Wall of China was put up to keep out these invaders who came from the region that lay toward the Land of Darkness.

But the remains of the Great Wall of China are not in the direction assigned to the Land of Gog and Magog, for they are rather to the west than to the east of Cambaluc. It may have been thought, though, and probably was, that the wall extended indefinitely to the eastward, and clear to the Outer Ocean—what we call the Pacific. Certainly there were none of the tribes of Gog and Magog living immediately to the north of Cambaluc. Yet the travelers—or some of them—

thought that they had distinctly caught the words "The Wall of Gog and Magog." There was only one conclusion that they could draw: the tribes of Gog and Magog were shut up behind a wall; this wall must have been north by east; and there was only one person who could have imprisoned the tribes, and that was Alexander the Great, for it was matter of legend that he had done so. Certainly the Europeans never imagined that they were putting the Mongol ancestors of that good emperor, Kubla Khan, in very bad company by identifying them with such wicked people as the subjects of the giant Magog.

We may be sure from this mistake of the travelers that the Mongol emperors had not extended their dominions very far in the northeasterly direction that leads, north of Korea, through Manchuria to the Sea of Okhotsk, and on through eastern Siberia to the Bering Strait. And there was no good reason for their doing so, when such a rich country as China was within their grasp.

This they did conquer, and very thoroughly. It was said of the fortifications of Taidu that they were not put up because the emperor feared any attack; in the days of Kubla Khan, in fact, such a thing was hardly to be thought of. But Kubla was a king who believed in taking his precautions, and he did so in other ways besides forming his Green Mount of coal within the gardens of his palace.

The travelers speak of a marvelous system of communication throughout the empire; and they speak of it as though it had been planned, like Taidu itself, by Kubla Khan. There was such a system of communication, but it had not been started by Kubla, for his Mongol ancestors centuries before had known and used similar ones wherever their conquests led them. But it is probably true that Kubla brought the system to perfection in China.

Running out from Cambaluc were a number of highways, each leading to one of the provinces of the empire. Along these—where he did not build them himself—Kubla had rows

of trees planted, so that the road was not only somewhat shaded and protected from wind, but clearly marked out. Along these roads, at distances that varied from twenty-five or thirty miles in well populated regions, to thirty-five or forty over the desert, were built large houses, containing all sorts of provisions and completely furnished. Marco says—and he ought to be a good authority, for he traveled far and wide through China in the emperor's service—that when travelers come to one of these houses "they find all the rooms furnished with fine beds and everything of silk that is necessary there, and are provided with everything they can need. If a king, even, were to come to one of these houses, he would think himself well lodged." Kings did come to them, as the old records tell us, when they went from the ends of the earth to do homage to the Great Khan at Cambaluc. We may believe that Marco is not exaggerating.

At each of these houses were stables with from two hundred to four hundred horses. Sometimes—probably in the deserts—there were camels instead. Each house had an official in charge who saw to it that there were always riders and animals ready to leave on a moment's notice. When a message was to be sent to Cambaluc, or from there to some distant province, a rider set out as fast as his horse or camel could take him. At intervals of about three miles between the great posthouses were smaller stations. There were principally for messengers who ran, and who could not make very great speed over a longer stretch than three miles. But the small stations had relays of horses also, and when there was any very urgent message, the riders bearing it could get fresh mounts at these places. The fastest service of all was a relay, not only of horses, but of riders also, at every three-mile post. On approaching, the first rider rang a bell that he carried at his waist, giving the second man time to mount his own fresh horse and be ready to gallop off at full speed the moment the letter had been passed on to him. Horses ready saddled and men to ride them were always waiting for such

emergencies at each of the posts. In this way, it was said, a letter might be carried two hundred and fifty miles a day.

The "black stones" were another of the wonders of China. They were coal—the same black stones of which Kubla Khan was said by the Chinese and Mongols to have built the hill in his gardens. Marco says about this: "It is true that everywhere in Cathay"—this was the name given particularly to northern China—"there is a sort of black stones that they dig up and burn like wood. If you make a fire with them at night and get them well kindled you will find that they will still be burning in the morning. And they make such good fuel that no other is used in all the land. They have enough wood, it is true; but this they do not burn, for those stones burn better and are cheaper."

In those times the use of coal was hardly known in Europe. But in certain districts of Europe that have since turned out to be mining regions the people sometimes found veins running quite near or altogether at the surface of the earth. There they knew that coal would burn and used it as fuel. This was so in the coal districts of England, and no doubt it was the case, too, in Germany and in other countries that have coal deposits. But Marco Polo, being an Italian, was from a country that has no coal; and so the "black stones" would seem to him to be particularly worth describing. Even in England, where coal is still very plentiful, the use of it as a fuel was hardly known outside of the districts where it was found running near the surface and could easily be dug up. The reason why the use of it did not spread farther in those days was that there was more forest country then than there is now, so that people could generally find plenty of wood to burn quite near at hand. In factories there was less need of fuel then than now, because at that time the steam engine was still unheard-of. Besides, the roads of Europe were very poor and the cost of transporting such a heavy material any distance would have made it more expensive than wood, even in regions where there were no forests.

Coal was used all over China because it was everywhere to be found. Many surveys of China's coal supply have been made within recent years and it has been found that nowhere else in the world is there so much of it. In the provinces of Shantung, Hunan, and Shansi there is said to be enough to supply the whole world for many years to come. One expert said that in southern Shansi alone there is enough coal to last the world for thousands of years. To-day that seems somewhat of an exaggeration, and the latest explorers of the Chinese coal fields say that the supply will be used up in less time than that. But this much is true: that China is still, as it was in the days of our travelers, the country where coal is the most abundant and the most widely used. It is said that in northern China, or Cathay, even the houses of the poorest peasants have brick stoves in which coal is burnt.

All the old travelers refer to the Mongol emperors as the most powerful in the whole world at that time. There is no doubt that they were, for their dominions reached from the Mediterranean to the Pacific and from the polar regions of the north to the Himalayas that stood guard over India. They even had possessions in the South Pacific: the travelers heard that the enormous island of Sumatra, even, was tributary to the Great Khan of Cathay. In modern times those who have explored the Chinese coal fields predicted that the world will again, at some not far distant time, become dependent upon China, if not subject to her, on account of this almost inexhaustible supply of coal. For we live in an age when steam is necessary for every sort of manufacture and for transportation; without fuel to create it no nation can become rich. But within the last few years scientists have begun to find traces of other sources of power—sources which may some day make the steam engine and the fuel it requires quite unnecessary. River currents, falls, and the tides are also being harnessed to supply electricity; and the tides alone, it is said, could furnish all the electric power we shall ever need. And so the world will probably never return to the

dominion of the rulers of Cathay. The thought of the explorers of the Chinese coal fields was an interesting one; and for a time it seemed that it might be a real prophecy. But the scientists of the West have not worked in their laboratories for nothing. They have convinced everybody nowadays that all the wonders are not to be found in the East.

But in former days China certainly contained enough of them to open men's eyes wide with astonishment. Among other things which they could not help being struck by was the way in which commerce was carried on. As in all large nations where there are many different products and many different centers in which they have to be sold, payments had to be made in some other way than "in kind." In simple country communities people have always found it practical to trade a horse for an ox or a measure of apples for a measure of grain, and so on. Every one knows the exact value of all these commodities in each season of the year, and it is easy to drive a bargain that is at once fair and advantageous to both parties. This was a usual way of doing business in most parts of the United States, not a century ago. In Europe, during the Middle Ages, it was very common indeed, even among great wholesale merchants who imported and exported goods.

Probably in a country where the population was as dense and the means of communication as good as they were in China the old method of trading had gone out of use. In every town and village merchants offered the products of various regions for sale, just as they do in our modern world; and so it would be simpler to pay them their price, or to bargain with them, than to spend time in arranging a trade. We may be quite sure that this was the usual Chinese method, for what the travelers tell us of the way of making payments in China shows that commerce there had been carried to great perfection.

What the travelers from Europe found, in fact, was nothing else than paper money. It was different in appearance from

our own, since it was made from the inner bark of the mulberry tree and was usually dark in color. But it was issued, like our own paper money, by the government, or by authority of the government, and so, like our own, it was legal tender and no one could refuse to accept it in payment.

Most of the writers about China in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries thought that this system of paper money was created by the Mongol emperors. But there was such a system in China several centuries before they arrived there. What Kubla Khan and his race did was to issue more and more of this currency, until finally a time came when it was forbidden to make payments in coin.

When the bank notes were printed, in several different sizes and denominations, they were stamped with the red seal of the proper government official and were sold at the mint in Cambaluc for their face value in metal coins. The paper of which they were made was very tough and strong and would last a long time. But, like our own paper money, it would finally become torn or hard to read; then it could be returned to the mint, where new bills of corresponding denominations could be had. Marco says that the holder of an old bill had to pay three per cent at the mint as a charge for the exchange.

The paper money served more than one purpose. In those days a merchant's caravan sometimes covered thousands of miles before arriving at its destination in China, and the value of the goods it brought might be enormous. This was especially the case with caravans bringing gold or precious stones, which the Khan himself always bought, forbidding any one else in his kingdom to make an offer for them. It was Kubla's object to collect all the real international currency—that is, metals and jewels—so that, in case of emergency, he might have limitless sums at his disposal to assist him in providing resistance against his possible enemies. When the caravan had sold its wares to the Khan it had, in payment, the bank notes that have been described. These, of course, would have been worthless outside the Mongol dominions.

But within those boundaries it was forbidden, on pain of death, to refuse payment in paper. Consequently the foreign caravan could go back the way it had come, and in the last good market in the Khan's states, it could buy up some desirable product to take back for sale in the place from which it had started. "With this paper money," Marco says, "they can buy what they like anywhere in the Empire; and it is also much lighter to carry about on their journeys." We can understand this especially well in the case of the caravans bringing jewels from India; if they had taken a payment in coins these would have weighed many times more than their original load, and they would have been forced to buy or hire more animals and servants to carry back the coins from Cambaluc to their own country.

When Marco was on his return journey, in 1294, and had gotten as far as Tabriz, in Persia, the Mongol governor of that place had the idea of issuing paper money there. Some think that Marco may have had something to do with the plan, since he thought it a very good one and had so long seen it used successfully in China. It happened in this case of the governor of Tabriz that he had squandered his revenues. If Marco had anything to do with the plan we may hope that he did not know this, and that the governor's notes would be worthless because there was nothing in the treasury with which they could be redeemed. But the people of Tabriz did know the whole story, and refused to accept or to circulate this paper money, although it was printed in almost exactly the same way as Kubla's bills, even bearing the Chinese characters. There was a riot and an assassination, and so the scheme was not carried out in that part of the world, for the time being.

As a matter of fact, although Marco, Friar Odoric, and others from Europe knew China very well and stayed there a long time, they did not stay long enough to see just what was brought about by Kubla's issues of paper money. The Chinese historians have given a truer story of what happened.

It was just about what might be expected in an absolute monarchy like the Cathay of that time: the Khan forced this paper money upon his subjects and, moreover, when he had need to do so he forced them to accept new issues. On one occasion the new bills were sold from the mint for not less than five times their nominal value in paper money of the earlier issue; and every one was forced to use the new money! Thus there were injustice and oppression as well as convenience in that scheme of things.

One fact about these paper bills ought to have struck the Europeans much more than it did. When Gutenberg was born these bills were still being printed in China, just as they had been for a long time. And yet the Chinese art of printing never seemed important enough to merit description in the works that were left by the travelers from Europe at that time. Marco mentions it only in passing, in speaking of the bills, but he does not give any description of how such work was done. It was almost unknown in Europe—entirely unknown in anything like our modern understanding of it. William the Conqueror is said to have used an inked stamp in place of a wax or lead seal for some of his official documents; and that is, after all, real printing. But books were not made with the printing press in Europe, and one would expect that Marco and the others would have been very much struck by the invention.

It may be that the need for printing had not yet developed in their western countries. We know that this need was first borne in upon the minds of Europeans at the time of the Reformation, when much had to be said about the advisability of changing certain religious beliefs, and when all must be given a chance to read on these questions if they could not hear about them from the lips of the various authorities on religion. And that was after the days that are being described in these pages.

There was another reason, too, why printing may not have appealed very much to the travelers. It would have been use-

less without a great supply of the right sort of material upon which large editions of books could be printed. This material has always been paper. In those days it was known in Europe, having been introduced through the Arabs and Persians, who learned how to make it from the Chinese and Mongol invaders. But this art was almost in its infancy in the West in Marco's day, and there was only a very small supply of paper at hand. Printing would have been useless until many paper mills were set up, and this was not done until the century that followed the adventures of these travelers into the East.

The Tartars of the thirteenth century had gained for themselves a reputation for cruelty among the nations of Europe. The accounts of travel in north central Asia that have already been given in these pages relate many an instance of the callous hard-heartedness of the tribes that lived on the mountains and plains of those parts of Kubla's dominions. Feeling for the sufferings of others seems not to have been so very common among them. Even to-day we are told that the Yakut Tartars of the distant North look upon wealth as a sign of the favor of their gods; having this point of view they justify themselves in giving nothing to those who are in distress, merely reminding them that they are evidently under the curse of the gods.

Kubla Khan's people had a similar point of view until they came into China. There, however, they met with Buddhist priests whose Indian lore of brotherly love had done much to make China itself more truly civilized. To the Mongols it was nothing less than a revelation of a truth that they had missed before. Kubla, who seems to have been endowed by nature with an unusually kind disposition, listened approvingly to the Buddhist priests who explained this doctrine to him. Without himself becoming a Buddhist, so far as we know—and much less a Christian, as some of the Europeans liked to think him—he made it a rule of conduct to be tolerant of the opinions of others and, especially, to be as kind to his own

subjects as he considered possible. We do not think of tyrants like him as men particularly considerate of the feelings and wants of others; and Kubla—as for instance in the case of his issues of paper money that might depreciate in value—was not always quite loyal to his subjects. But in the matter of giving open-handedly he remembered the teachings of the Buddhist priests. And he did this so well that he aroused the admiration of the Christians—who were no strangers to charity, as the history of European cities and monastic orders clearly shows. It was unheard of in Europe in those times, just as it was in China, for a rich man to say to a beggar: "Go with God's curse! For if He loved you as well as He loves me He would have provided for you." And yet Marco tells us that that was what the Mongols used to say before they came under the softening influence of the Chinese and their Buddhist priests.

The way in which Kubla Khan provided for his charities is quite fully described. In times of plenty, when grain was cheap, he used to send out his officers to all parts of the kingdom to buy up all the surplus. This he had stored in granaries—one thinks of Joseph in Egypt and his stores of grain—and when a bad season came on he let this be sold. But it was not sold at famine prices, for it always went to the people who most needed it at the price paid in times of plenty, or at about that. We may imagine that Kubla, who was a prudent man in money matters, probably did add a little to the price of this grain to repay himself for the expense to which he had been put in storing it. We do not know exactly how it was managed. But it is worth while to mention that this may have been so, as, in that case, we may see how a government could provide such protection against famine at no cost to itself. Marco's story would make us believe that the stores of grain were sold out at perhaps less than their original price. "And by this providence of the Emperor's," Marco says, "his people can never suffer from dearth. He

does the same over his whole Empire, having these supplies stored everywhere, according to a calculation of the wants and necessities of the people."

After the times of which we are writing, the system gradually became useless because the stores were under the supervision of unscrupulous men who wished merely to enrich themselves from this source.

Farmers, all the world over, are a class of people who may work very hard and yet get no reward at all for their labor. All that they do depends so much upon circumstances of weather and the health of their crops and animals that they stand in particular need of assistance in bad years so that they may be able to go on again when the bad time is over. Many governments of to-day have arranged ways of helping farmers but there is still a great deal of hardship among them in bad years.

"Farm relief," as we sometimes call it, was a thing that Kubla considered very important, and his care in the matter extended to epidemics among animals as well as to failure and blight in crops. This is Marco's description of how the imperial Mongol government took care of such emergencies:

"Now you are to know that the Emperor sends his messengers throughout all his lands, kingdoms and provinces to find out from his officers whether the people are in want on account of bad seasons, storms, locusts, or any disaster of that kind. From the ones who have suffered from such things no taxes are taken that year. Not only that, but he has these people supplied with grain of his own for food and for seed. Now this surely is very open-handed of him. And when the winter comes around he has inquiry made about people who have lost their farm animals, whether on account of an epidemic or for any other reason. Such people are not only exempted from paying taxes, but their animals are replaced by others. And so it is, as I tell you, that this lord helps his subjects every year." Marco seems to think that it was a matter of pure charity. In reality it was also good statesman-

ship, for by this timely help Kubla kept his empire prosperous. We have all heard stories of the terrible famines from which China has suffered in modern times and we can only regret that the wise regulations of Kubla Khan were allowed to fall into disuse.

The farmers were not the only class that benefited by them. We are given to understand that the people living in cities, and particularly in Cambaluc, were very liberally helped. It may be that the emperor had a particular reason for favoring those who lived in his capital. For there was the story that has already been mentioned here of Kubla's fear that the inhabitants of the old city of Yenking might revolt against his authority and how that was one of his principal reasons for planning and building Taidu.

Whatever his fears may have been in the beginning they must have disappeared after a time. Probably the inhabitants of Yenking had never been so well taken care of as they were in Kubla's day. The support provided by him for all the poor in Cambaluc almost passes belief, if we are to accept Marco Polo's story:

"You see, he has a choice made of a number of poor families in the city. Some of these may have six members in the house, some eight, some ten—more or less as it may happen, but a great many people all told. Each of these families he has supplied with wheat and other grain, enough to last all the year. And he never fails to do this every year. Moreover, everybody who wishes to go to the daily dole at the Court gets a large loaf hot from the oven, and nobody is refused, since the Emperor has ordered it. And so some thirty thousand people go to get these loaves every day from one year's end to the other. Now this is very charitable in the Emperor to take pity on his poor people in this way!"

Clothing also was given to the poor, and the way in which this was managed is quite interesting. There was a tax "in kind" levied on all materials from which clothing can be made, such as silk, flax, and wool. That is, for every given quantity

of these materials that was produced a certain part had to be handed over to the imperial collectors. This was stored in a special warehouse. Then it was also a law that every artisan had to give one day's labor a week in the Khan's service. In this way the wool or silk, or whatever it happened to be, was made up into material for clothing, some of it being woven in a light texture for summer wear and some heavier for protection in cold weather. There seems to have been a department to take charge of this weaving in every city. Some of the goods was given out in charity to the poor and the rest was used for the clothing of the troops. Perhaps not all, however; for there were special imperial silk factories, and a good deal of what was made there may have been intended for exportation to foreign countries.

Some people might criticize this method of helping the needy, for the raw materials themselves and the labor necessary to prepare and to weave them were all given in the form of taxes or forced labor. And so the Khan's charity cost him nothing at all, and he may even have made a large profit on the silk goods intended for exportation.

But there is another way of looking at it. Our old travelers often mention the great population of China—what large cities lay close together, the families of many people each, and what endless numbers there were for every sort of labor. Even then China had a far denser population than Europe, and it is probable that in some districts it was really overpopulated. Under such circumstances the Khan's system of taxing the property and labor of those who had good employment seems quite just. For in this way he kept alive a great many people who could find no profitable work to do, at the expense of those who had either an occupation or property of their own.

Perhaps the Pharaohs of Egypt had some such idea in mind when they built their pyramids. No doubt they were hard taskmasters to the men who dragged up the great stones of which the pyramids were built. But they fed these men while

the work was going on, out of the stores that were collected by the tax-gatherers. During a part of the year there was work for every one in the grain fields, and then the pyramid building was probably given up for the time being. We cannot be absolutely sure of these facts, but those who have studied Egyptian history carefully let us understand that this was probably the way in which the work was done. Egypt, like China, was an overpopulated country, and so something had to be taken from the rich to feed the poor while they were unemployed. We hear a great deal about the cruel tyranny of ancient times, and no doubt what we hear is true. But it is also possible that some common sense was used, and that even the building of the pyramids was justified by something more laudable and better than the mere desire of a proud king to make his memory eternal.

The Luku Bridge

CHAPTER VIII

OF WHAT LAY SOUTHWEST OF CAMBALUC

"When you leave the city of Cambaluc and have ridden ten miles you come to a very large river which they call Pulisanghin and which flows into the ocean, so that merchants with their cargoes come up that way from the sea. Over this river is a very fine stone bridge—so fine, in fact, that there are few to equal it. This is how it is built: it is three hundred paces long, and it must be eight paces wide, for ten mounted men can ride across it abreast. It has twenty-four arches and as many water mills, and is all of very fine marble and well built upon solid foundations. Along the top of the bridge, on both sides, are parapets of marble slabs and columns. They are built as follows: at the entrance to the bridge there is a marble column and under it a marble lion, the column standing on the lion's back. On the top of the column is a second marble lion, and both are very large and beautifully carved.

A pace from this column is another exactly like it with another pair of lions. The space between these is enclosed with gray marble slabs to keep people from falling into the water. And so these columns run from space to space along both sides of the bridge so that, altogether, it is a beautiful thing."

Travelers who have gone into that country since Marco's time—for he wrote the description—have little doubt that this is the famous Luku Bridge, said to be the finest one in all China. Only, Marco did not describe it very exactly. The columns surmounted by carven lions, and the slabs of the parapet, are still there just as he pictures them. But the bridge has only eleven arches, instead of the twenty-four he mentions.

It was about a hundred years old when our travelers saw it and was built by one of the emperors who was reigning in 1189, before Kubla's family came to Cambaluc. It was completed in 1194. Those who have measured the bridge in more recent times say that it is eight hundred and fifty feet in length, so that we can easily understand the wonder it inspired in the Europeans, who had never seen anything in the West that could compare with it. As for the lions that Marco thought so beautiful, some of them have disappeared since his time. Today the columns of the parapets no longer rest upon the backs of lions but upon the stone pavement of the causeway. But each still bears a lion on its summit.

The Europeans were not alone in their admiration for this tremendous piece of architectural engineering, and the old Chinese historians give an amusing anecdote to show how vast and complicated it was. This anecdote, or illustration, is concerned with the carved lions. There were so many of these, it was said, that no one could possibly count them correctly. Yet people were always making a futile attempt to do so. The historians had to record, therefore, the sad fact that several individuals had actually lost their minds in trying to count these lions.

The water mills are no longer to be seen under the arches of

the Luku Bridge. What they were used for we do not know. But we do know that, in Europe at least, before the days of the steam engine, water wheels were often mounted in the arches of bridges, where the current was swift. Sometimes these supplied power to raise a portion of the river water itself to a level from which it would run in conduits to districts where it was needed. Sometimes they were used to run grist mills. There are examples of that use in Rome, about eight centuries before Marco's time. Long afterward a number of water wheels were mounted in the arches of London Bridge to supply power to pump the Thames water up into a reservoir that fed mains running to different parts of the city.

"When you leave the Bridge," Marco goes on, "and ride into the west you find excellent inns all along the way, as well as fine vineyards, fields, gardens and springs. Then, after thirty miles you come to a fine large city called Juju. Here there are many heathen monasteries. The people live by trade and manufacture, and they make silk-and-gold cloth and very fine taffeta. Here also there are a great many inns." This city is now called Chochow.

What Marco has to say about silk manufacture in this town is rather strange, for silk is no longer produced in the countryside round about Chochow. Yet the oldest accounts say that it was here that the silkworm was first found. One Chinese historian was very much put out by the fact that the industry had dwindled away in that part of the country. After racking his brains a little about the matter he seems to have concluded that he would not run the risk of coming to the dismal end of the lion-counters at the Luku Bridge. So he wrote: "I do not know any reason why the production of silk should have ceased there except the fact that the worms refused to live there."

Going on again from Chochow through a goodly region of fertile country, cities and castles, travelers came to "The Great River Caramoran." They got this name from the Mongol language, in which this river is called "Kara-Muren,"

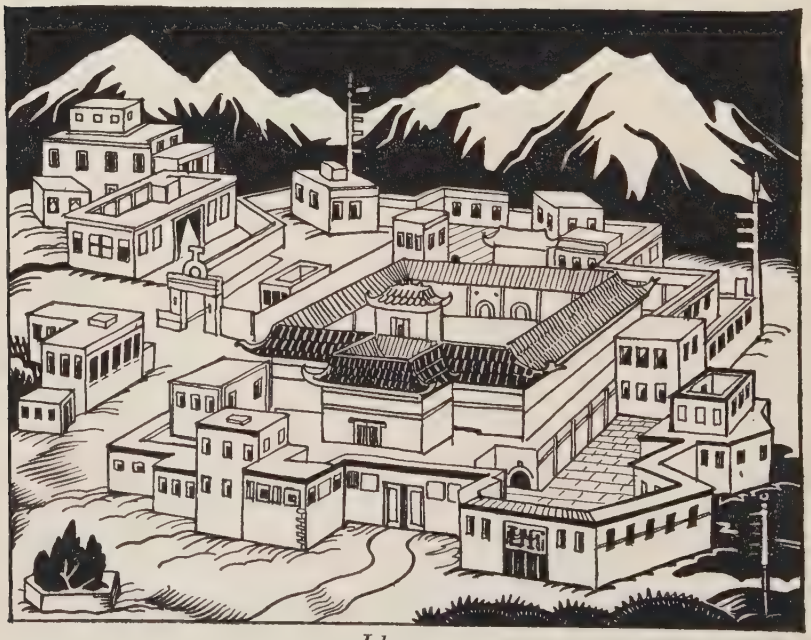
or "Black River." In our geographies it is labeled the Hoang-Ho sometimes; in English we generally call it the Yellow River. "You come to a river called Caramoran," Marco says, "which is so big that no bridge can be built across it. For it is of immense width and depth and it reaches to the Great Ocean that encircles the universe—I mean the whole earth." Marco was an experienced traveler but he was not very clear on the true shape of the earth; later on it will be shown that the writer of "The Travels of Sir John Mandeville" had a more modern idea of this. Marco was not quite right, either, about the Hoang-Ho being deep at this place, which was only about one week's journey from Singanfu, the capital of the province of Shen-Si. In this lower part of the Hoang-Ho, except where the current is too rapid for men to get a foothold, they can wade over most of the river, with water running only up to the waist. But it is true enough that here the Hoang-Ho is very wide, ranging from fifteen hundred to eighteen hundred feet from one bank to the other.

Outside Singanfu was the palace of Mangalai, a son of Kubla Khan, and the governor of the province. It was in a plain threaded by many streams. All around this palace ran a wall five miles long; and, inside, the rooms were painted and ornamented with gold. Mangalai, like his father, was a good sovereign, making his people happy because he knew how to be just. That is what Marco says, and possibly he may have been prejudiced in favor of his good friend, the emperor, and his family. It is hard to believe that there were not then, as now, some misery and unhappiness in such a thickly populated country, where everybody could not hope to find profitable work to do. At the same time, the old accounts of travelers in China almost all describe a land of mild-mannered, industrious people, far less racked by the hardships of poverty and war than those who lived in Europe at the same time. Conditions were very hard in Europe then; perhaps, from our modern point of view, they were very hard in China also. But if the travelers from the West were so much struck by the content-

ment and well-being of the Chinese, we can do nothing else than conclude that life was happier there than among the nations of Europe.

Then, after leaving Singanfu, the traveler might go on still farther to the west, through a province called Acbalec Manzi, until he came to the city of Sindafu, which we now call Chengtufu, in the Province of Szechwan. Some travelers of our times have said that this is the finest of all the Chinese cities and that it is very large, having about a million inhabitants. In the thirteenth century it was less striking. What is particularly mentioned is a remarkable bridge that stands in this city. Marco can best describe it:

"Let us now speak of a great bridge that crosses the river in this city. The bridge is built of stone and is seven paces wide and half a mile long—the river being that wide there, as I told you. All along the length of this bridge, on both sides,



Lhassa

there are marble columns to hold up the roof. For the bridge is roofed over from one end to the other with richly painted timber. On this bridge there are houses in which many objects are made and sold. But these houses are only of wood; they are set up in the morning and taken down in the evening. Then too, on this bridge stands the Great Khan's 'Comercque,' or customs-house, where his tolls and taxes are collected. And I can tell you that the dues taken in on this bridge for the Khan amount to a thousand pieces of fine gold every day, and more than that."

Going still farther to the westward the traveler might reach Thibet—a land of mystery to most people in modern times; it seems to have been much more open to travelers in the thirteenth century than it is to-day. Friar Odoric was certainly there, and Marco, too, seems to have some knowledge of the country. But there is no evidence at all that he ever got into the famous forbidden city of Lhassa. Odoric almost surely did, for he tells of a certain Gota in this land of Thibet—and his description answers well enough to what has been learned about Lhassa by later travelers. "Gota" was a very close copy of a native Thibetan word used to mean the country itself; Odoric no doubt heard this word in connection with Lhassa and supposed, not understanding the language perfectly, that it was the name of the city.

The way to Thibet lay five days' journey out from Chengtufu, and on arriving at the border the traveler found it to be "a country that has been sadly laid waste." It was Marco who wrote in that way, and no doubt he described what he saw there exactly as he found it, for it was not long before his time that the Great Khan in Cambaluc had made the country tributary to him. What he says next shows that what usually happens in the wake of war had happened also in the part of Thibet to which he went: the few inhabitants who remained there were not able to keep down the number of the wild beasts that came in. These beasts had therefore grown very numerous everywhere and were a menace. So the travelers

who went through this land had to find some means of getting rid of the wild animals, or at any rate, since they could not do this entirely, of keeping them at a distance. They thought of an ingenious way of doing so, but one that must have made of that part of Thibet a fairly uncomfortable region. This is how Marco describes it:

"In these parts there is a great deal of bamboo, fully three palms around and fifteen paces long, with joints about every three palms. And let me tell you that the merchants and other travelers who go through that country have the custom of gathering this bamboo at twilight and of making fires of it. For as it burns it explodes so loudly that the lions, bears and other wild beasts are terribly frightened and run away as fast as they can go; in fact, there is nothing that will make them come near a fire like that. . . . I will tell you how it is that the bamboo makes such a noise. The people cut it green—for there is a great deal of it—and set fire to a heap of it all at once. After it has been burning a while it explodes; and this makes such a loud noise that you could hear it ten miles away. In fact, any one who is not used to it and should hear it unexpectedly might easily faint away or die of fright. But those who are used to it do not mind it at all. So those who are not accustomed to it stuff their ears well with cotton and wrap up their heads and faces with all the clothes they can; and so they manage until they get used to the noise. . . . I am telling you the truth, though, when I say that the first time you hear it nothing can be more terrifying. And yet, in spite of all that, the lions and bears and other wild beasts do sometimes come and work a great deal of damage; for they are so numerous in those regions."

Those who have gone into Thibet since have not found any bamboo quite the size of that described by Marco. The three palms he mentions for the circumference of the stalks would amount to about two feet and a third in our measurements, and this is larger than the bamboo that grows there now. The noise of the explosions, too, may not have been quite so loud

as he says; for ten miles is a long way for a sound to carry. But those who have been present when a bamboo house or a forest containing any bamboo catches fire say that the noise of the explosions is really very loud indeed. In the case of houses it is less, of course, for the bamboo used in building them is thoroughly dried out, whereas that described by Marco was perfectly green and so would produce much more steam and a louder report.

These natural bombs make one think of an invention that was made in European countries a little after Marco's time. People had very hazy ideas about steam in those days; but they could not help having some experience with it and they knew very well that it has in it the power to move heavy objects. This had been known, in fact, for more than a thousand years, for some of the engineers of ancient Greece had devised machines that took their motion from steam. But the cylinder had not been invented, and so nothing practical could be accomplished. The nearest the Europeans had come to the practical use of steam for power in the Middle Ages is shown by a steam cannon that was devised then and that seems to have been perfected by the great artist and engineer, Leonardo da Vinci. In this cannon a heavy metal water-case was mounted behind the barrel containing the shot. Underneath the water-case was a grate in which a fire was lighted. Facing forward in the case, toward the shot, was a valve so arranged that it would fly open under a given pressure, which, of course, was less than that required to burst the walls of the water-case. And so, when the fire had been burning long enough to create the required amount of steam, the valve would fly open and the shot would be driven out of the barrel. The principle was just the same as that of the Thibetan bamboo bombs, except that the power was harnessed so that it could be used in a given direction, whereas the bamboo simply split lengthwise, along the grain.

Interesting as it is, Marco's account of Thibet does not tell us nearly as much of what we should like to know about that

country as Friar Odoric's. The reason is that Marco, although his route lay along the outer territories of Thibet, did not find it worth his while to go into the interior, to the mysterious city of Lhassa. Yet there is no place in the world that has aroused more curiosity that this "Forbidden City" of the lamas. Several modern travelers have succeded in getting there; but more have failed than succeeded in this adventure. Friar Odoric is said to have been the first European to set foot in its streets. And so what he has to say is doubly interesting. If he had only known how strictly Lhassa was to be guarded from the approach of foreigners in later centuries he might probably have satisfied our curiosity by leaving a fuller account than he did. But he took Lhassa very much as a matter of course in his travels and says far less about it than of many other places he visited. But the little he does tell us is very interesting indeed when we come to compare it with what others learned about Lhassa after his travels were over.

Odoric calls Thibet "the Kingdom of Riboth," perhaps because the Thibetans themselves call their country by a name that sounds a little like the last part of that word, or "-both." Marco, however, and some other travelers, call it "Tebet," which was a close imitation of the Chinese way of naming that country. Friar Odoric begins his description of Thibet in this way:

"From this province I went on to another very large one that is called Riboth; and it is towards India. The people in this country live in tents of black felt. Their chief city is very beautiful, built all of white stone and with the streets well paved. It is called Gota. In this city none may shed the blood of man or beast; this is on account of the reverence they have for an idol that they worship. In this city lives the 'obassy'; in their language this means 'pope.' He is the chief of all the idolaters and appoints the priests as he likes."

This is not very much about Lhassa—or "Gota"—but it is very interesting. The first thought that comes into one's mind, perhaps, is that this "obassy" whom Odoric mentions

must be the mysterious personage we sometimes read about under the name of "The Grand Lama of Thibet." For us the Grand Lama is a hereditary Buddhist pope—a strange, silent figure of whom we know scarcely anything except that he lives in a great palace in Lhassa and rules the people as an absolute monarch. He is under the Chinese government, however, to some extent, just as the obassy of Odoric's time was subject to the Great Khan of the Mongols. But the Grand Lama—or Dalai Lama, as he is sometimes called—is not really the successor of Odoric's obassy. The first of the Grand Lamas was born in 1391, so that his rule began only about a century after the time of Odoric's visit. The Obassy was simply one of a number of Buddhist priests who had gotten great power in Lhassa and who were reverenced—all in about the same degree—by the people of Thibet. A century later, then, one of the number came to be particularly honored for some reason or other and got the supremacy over all the rest that the Grand Lama of to-day still holds as his right. Our European histories tell a very similar story about the popes of Rome, whose authority was sometimes questioned by other prelates, either in the Levant or, at one time for the greater part of a century, by the anti-pope who lived in Avignon in France. In the same way the bishops of Canterbury and of York, in England, were long considered to be equal in authority and above all the other bishops in England; finally it was decided that there ought to be a single head of the Church there, and the question as to who that should be was decided in favor of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who still has that prestige in the Church of England.

What Odoric says about the paved streets is interesting because in Europe, in his time, by no means all the cities could boast of paving. A Chinese writer might not have mentioned the fact that the streets of Lhassa had been improved in this way, for paving was the rule in the larger cities of China and he would not have noticed this as anything particularly worth mentioning. In Italy, which was Odoric's country, many cities

were paved at that time; for the ancient Romans had set the example in this and the Italians kept up the practice more or less. As for England, some of the principal towns there were not paved until a good two hundred years after Odoric wrote.

More recent travelers tell us that the streets of Lhassa are not only paved—at least in the central part of the city—but that they are laid out straight. In this, of course, they conformed to the plan that had been used also in many cities of China and that was being adopted in Europe for a number of new towns.

As for the houses themselves, what Odoric says is not quite exact. They were not all "of white stone"; but they appeared to be so. A writer who had a better chance than Odoric did to examine these houses says that "they are generally large, built several stories high and with a flat roof that slants a little so that the water can run off. They are entirely whitewashed, with the exception of the frames for windows and doors, which are red or yellow. . . . The inhabitants of Lhassa are accustomed to whitewash their houses every year, so that they are usually perfectly clean and seem to have been just built." Inside, however, this writer says that the houses are not clean at all, and adds that, "in a way, they are nothing but great whitened sepulchres." So what Odoric took for white stone was really only a finish of whitewash, perhaps put on over plaster, as the Europeans often arrange the outside finish of house walls to-day. There were stone houses; but there were others built of brick or of clay—probably something like our "adobe" houses of the Southwest of the United States. But because of the way in which they were finished on the outside all these buildings seemed to be of the same white material.

After Odoric was in Lhassa another kind of house began to be built there—a very curious kind indeed. He does not mention seeing any of that kind, and we may even feel sure that not only he, but every inhabitant of Lhassa, would have denied that such houses as these could ever be seen there. In fact,

this type of building was not possible until the people had made a change in their religious observances. Odoric says that in that city "none might shed the blood of man or beast"; and in fact it was a belief that had come up out of India along with the Buddhist religion that creatures should not be killed. And that, of course, also meant that animals should not be slaughtered for food. Finally the old doctrines were modified enough to permit this, and the people of Lhassa began to eat beef and mutton. Thereupon they also began to build houses out of the horns of cattle and sheep. They took so kindly to this strange architectural style that in later times one traveler tells us that he found a whole section of the city built of nothing but horns embedded in mortar. The Thibetan builders, he says, liked to alternate the sheep's horns with those of cattle to make any number of strange designs, letting the smooth surface of one kind of horn contrast with the roughness of the other. The houses built in this way, he says, were extremely solid. Another peculiar thing about them was that they were the only ones in Lhassa that were not whitewashed.

Odoric adds a good deal about the customs of the Thibetans, and, since the people were—as they still are—a little inclined to savage beliefs, there is some gruesome lore in this part of his book. But there is nothing that is really very interesting in itself and nothing that has about it the charm of the marvelous legends that the travelers found in other countries to which they went. So we may omit that part.

This long excursion into the depths of Thibet takes us far away from the usual north and south routes. Most of the travelers, in fact, never saw the provinces of Central China or the western lands, including Thibet. But because recent expeditions to this last mysterious country have given it a special interest for most of us, it is worth while to make this detour along with Odoric and Marco Polo.

The usual routes used in coming from Europe or in returning there were the northern, leading into Cambaluc by the Gobi Desert, and the southern, where the east coast of China

brought the travelers down to the islands of Sumatra and Java, and so on to Ceylon and India, whence they could go back through the Indian Ocean to the Levant and the Mediterranean. Returning, then, from Thibet, we can follow this southern route, which was the one that was the most remarkable for the number of strange things that were to be seen—or imagined—along its course.

The trebuchets hurled stones into the city

CHAPTER IX

WHAT THE TRAVELERS SAW WHEN THEY WENT SOUTH FROM CAMBALUC ALONG THE SEA

If you were to go south from the Luku Bridge instead of southwest the road was nearly parallel with the seacoast. Everywhere in this region were rich fields, flourishing towns and large villages. After many days of journeying the road led to the great Caramoran River, which had to be crossed on the southwest route also. To the north of it was Cathay. When the travelers had crossed to the south bank they found themselves in the kingdom of Manzi, or the southern part of China. The river in this place flowed along a line more or less near the thirty-fourth degree of latitude, north. The first large town on the south bank, following this eastern route, was Hwainganchow; Marco calls it Coiganju.

To-day the city of Hwainganchow is nowhere near the Caramoran River—or Hoang-Ho, as we call it. Yet the thirteenth century travelers were not wrong in locating the places as they did. In their time the Hoang-Ho flowed far to the south of its present bed. All this has been verified from the old Chinese records, and we know from them that at different times since history has been written the Hoang-Ho has flowed to the sea through three different courses. There are traces of these various river beds also and each has been fully charted.

In the earliest times the Hoang-Ho turned north at about the hundred and fourteenth degree of longitude, east, and flowed into the Gulf of Pe-Chihli. Then it changed its course more than once, for there are traces of the river both north and south of the city of Lintsingchow. Then, at some time between 200 and 400 A.D., a great flood forced it into a new natural channel, a little more to the south, and running near the cities of Kaifungfu and Tsinanfu, to empty into the Gulf of Pe-Chihli. This is the present-day course of the Hoang-Ho, and is found marked on all the maps. It has been so since the year 1853. But in the days when our travelers went down by the east route they did not come to the Hoang-Ho until they had almost reached the city of Hwainganchow. Far to the west of that town, at about the spot where the other town of Kaifungfu is found marked on the maps, the river had taken the southern course that was noticed by the travelers. This took place almost a hundred years before they arrived in China; it is said, about the year 1200.

Marco and the others seem never to have heard the remarkable story of the wanderings of the Hoang-Ho. If they had, it is certain that they would have rewritten it in their tales of wonder; for they could have thought nothing that they met with in all their travels more remarkable than this very story.

"When you leave Coiganju," Marco says, "you ride southeast for a day along a causeway paved with fine stone. This

is at the border of the Kingdom of Manzi. On both sides there is a great expanse of water, so that you cannot enter the province except over this causeway." Going on still farther, the way led to the great city of Yanju, which is the one labeled Yangchow on our maps. This was a city that Marco might have described further, for he was himself governor of it under the appointment of the Emperor of Cathay. The little that he does say is very interesting, however, because he mentions the office that he held there. This city of Yangchow, he says, is "very great and noble" and "has twenty-seven other prosperous cities under its administration. . . . And Messer Marco Polo himself, of whom this book speaks, governed this city for three whole years, by the order of the Great Khan. The people live by trade and manufactures; for much armor for knights and men-at-arms is made there. And in this city and its neighborhood many troops are stationed by the Khan's orders." The three years of Marco's governorship of Yangchow must have fallen somewhere between 1282 and 1288.

When Odoric came to Yangchow, after Marco had left, he was much struck by it. He calls it "Jamathay," but his description of it, as well as the route that he followed to get there leave no doubt about what city it really was. He noticed its great size especially. Perhaps he may even have exaggerated it somewhat, for he gives us the enormous figure of seven hundred thousand familes—or at the very least five hundred thousand—as living there. How many individuals that would make in a country where families were large we may imagine; but it would surely come to several millions. The fact that Odoric makes such a vague estimate leaves him open to the suspicion that he had no definite ideas at all on the subject. But we know that Yangchow was very large, for it was really formed from three cities that lay close together; and in those days it was certainly among the chief manufacturing centers of China, having great salt refineries and spinning mills. Odoric says that he found there a monastery of Christian monks. This would mean that missionaries from

the West had selected Yangchow as a center for their work; and they would no doubt choose one of the largest cities for this purpose as the place where they could hope to influence the most people without the necessity of going long journeys. In Odoric's time there were a number of Christian missionaries in different cities of Cathay and Manzi, and the Mongols and Chinese were not inclined to molest them very much. It was not until several centuries later that many of them were murdered or driven out, so that the work of introducing Christianity there was delayed for a long time.

Odoric notices that in Yangchow the Chinese particularly liked to amuse themselves in places of public entertainment. "The Book of Sir John Mandeville" seems to have copied Odoric's description of this custom; but it adds a little to it, and in such quaint language that it makes a very amusing passage. It runs as follows:

"In that country in the good towns is a good custom. For whosoever will make a feast for any of his friends there be certain inns in every good town. And he that will make the feast will say to the innkeeper: 'Array for me to-morrow a good dinner for so many folk.' And he tells him the number and consults with him about the dishes. And he says also: 'So much I will spend, and no more.' And anon the innkeeper arrays for him so beautifully and so well and so honestly that there shall lack no thing. And it shall be done sooner and with less cost than if a man made it in his own house." Odoric, when he talks about these restaurants, compares them particularly to the "cabarets" of Flanders; it is hard to say why he does so, for there were restaurants and hotels all over Europe in those times, and we might expect that he would have chosen some Italian ones for the purpose of his comparison. It must have been that there was really some special similarity between the Flemish and Chinese hostelries; but what it was we do not know.

The travelers mention another city not far distant from Yangchow where innkeeping was carried on in a very peculiar

manner. This town was on a river large enough to accommodate ships of great size; and some of these ships were used as hostelries. "This city," Odoric says, "has more ships than any other city in the world, and all of them are as white as they would be if they were painted. In these ships are very fine inns with such goodly rooms and everything to match that no one could describe it all." The "Mandeville" says, too, that these ships were white, but that the color was that of the wood of which the hulls were built. In reality the white color came from a calking preparation which the Chinese used in preference to our tar calk. In the days of wooden ships, which are almost over now, some waterproof material had to be used to protect the small cracks that always are found between timbers when any warping takes place. The Chinese used a preparation of lime and rosin for this; and since lime formed the body of it the color of the calk was white. That explains what the writer of the "Mandeville" and Friar Odoric did not understand. The ships were not built of a wood that was pure white, and yet they were not painted. It was the lime calk that gave them their color. This preparation is still used by the Chinese—or was until recently—and marine architects who have examined it say that it is better than the tar calk, both because it has no bad smell and because it does not burn easily. Many fires on western ships used to be laid to the tar with which they were covered.

The western travelers were always much impressed by the Chinese ships, which were built upon an entirely different system from that used in Europe. They were sailed in another way, their appearance was not at all the same, and they were of immense size. Besides, these huge Chinese junks made voyages that seemed all but miraculous to the Arabian mariners, who had small, light ships. Even the Europeans, who had heavier craft, could not match the marine architects of China in the building of great vessels. There is a Chinese story—no one has yet proved whether it is true or not—that, in the distant past, at least one Chinese junk traversed the

Pacific and moored in the waters of the west coast of America. It is certain that in the seventeenth century one of them sailed to Italy, on a mission to the Pope at Rome, and went safely back again to China. But in those days Europeans were doing even more remarkable things on the sea, although still in smaller ships.

Not far away from the city of the white ships lay another which was the chief place of one of the richest provinces in the empire of Kubla Khan. "Saianfu" Marco calls it; nowadays we generally use the spelling "Siangyangfu." Nothing remarkable is reported about this city except that it was strongly fortified and surrounded on three sides by deep water, so that it had not submitted to the armies of Kubla Khan as all the other Chinese cities had done. When Marco arrived there, in the company of his father and uncle, Siangyangfu had been besieged by the Tartar armies for three years, but was still holding out. The Khan's generals were at their wits' end, for the deep water prevented them from surrounding the city and they could not cut off supplies of provisions and fuel. It was possible only for them to bombard the town from the north side. But their artillery was weak, they could not get very close to the walls, and there seemed to be small hope of their ever taking the place at all.

Histories used to report that gunpowder was known in the land of China much earlier than in Europe, and that cannon had been invented and used there. The story of the siege of Siangyangfu is in itself enough to prove that this was not true. It is probable that powder was known in the Orient; but we may feel certain that cannon were not. If they had been, Marco and his father and uncle would not have had the great opportunity to distinguish themselves which they found awaiting them at Siangyangfu. Marco tells the story in this way:

"Now you are to know that when the army of the Great Khan had been three years at the siege of this city, and could not take it, they were very angry. And then Messer Nicolo and Messer Maffeo and Messer Marco said: 'We will find you

a way to make the city surrender now.' And the officers in the besieging army said that they would be very glad to find a way. And all this was said in the presence of the Great Khan, for the messengers from the besieging army had come to tell the emperor that they could not take the city by blockade and that the people in it got provisions by a way that could not be cut off. The emperor said: 'You must manage to take the city!' Then said the two brothers and Messer Marco: 'Sire, we have with us in our retinue men who can build machines that will shoot such great stones that those in the city will not be able to hold out, but will surrender as soon as the machine, which is called the trebuchet, has shot among them.' The emperor said to Messer Nicolo and to his brother and his son that he would like to have this done and said that they should have the machine built as soon as possible.

"Then Messer Nicolo and his brother and his son, who had among their followers a German and a Nestorian Christian who were well trained in such work, told these men to make two or three machines that could throw stones weighing three hundred pounds. And these two men made three fine machines.

"And when they were finished the emperor had them taken to his army that was at the siege of Saianfu but could not take the city. And when the trebuchets had been brought to the army they had them set up; and to the Tartars this seemed the greatest marvel in the world.

"And what shall I tell you? When the trebuchets were set up and put in action then each of them hurled a stone into the city. These struck the houses and shattered and ruined everything, making a great noise and commotion. And when the men in the city saw this evil chance that never they had seen before they were so surprised and affrighted that they knew not what to say or do. They took counsel together; but they could not for all that find any way to escape from these trebuchets. They said that they were all dead men if they did not surrender."

And so, Marco says, they did surrender on the same conditions that had been granted by Kubla Khan to all the other cities of Manzi. "And this happened through the merit of Messer Nicolo and Messer Maffeo and Messer Marco. And it was no small thing: for you are to understand that this city, with the province under it, is certainly one of the best of the possessions of the Great Khan, for he collects there many taxes and has great profit of it."

The formidable piece of artillery constructed under the direction of the Polos was called both " trebuchet" and "mangonel." The word used in the account is the one that was generally given to the heaviest type of artillery, while "mangonel" referred to lighter machines. The problem of the officers besieging Siangyangfu was, of course, to get a machine of the greatest power and capable of demolishing the city whose supplies could not be cut off. We may be quite sure that the Chinese and Mongol military engineers had never invented any artillery that could compare with that used in Europe for long-range operations.

But the trebuchets that were in use by the workmen of the Polos were toys, compared with some that were made in Europe at that time. At Siangyangfu three-hundred-pound stones were hurled. European armies sometimes had machines that would discharge a missile as heavy as a ton and a half.

The trebuchet consisted of a massive wooden scaffolding with a long swinging beam pivoted into it at the summit, the axle running through the beam near one of its ends. On the long end of the swinging beam was a sling, in which the shot was placed; on the short end was a great weight. Ropes attached near the sling were run through windlasses, which, when they were turned by a number of men, would haul the sling-end of the beam to the ground while the shorter, weighted end was raised. Then the beam was secured by a latch that could be freed by pulling a cord or striking a bolt. When the rock had been adjusted in the sling the latch was opened. Then the

weight on the short end of the tilting beam fell toward the ground, while the long end, with the sling attached to it, whirled up into the air. One end of the sling was not firmly attached to the beam but only looped over a bracket that was so built that, at a certain angle in the upward sweep of the beam, the sling would fall off and release the rock.

Modern engineers have estimated the dimensions and weights that would be required in a trebuchet of the heaviest kind, capable of hurling stones weighing three thousand pounds. The swinging beam in such a case would have to be sixty-five feet long and carry on its short end a weight of thirty-six thousand pounds. Some trebuchets have been made in modern times, although none so large as that, and it was found that the force of the swing was so great that the wooden scaffolding had to be made of the heaviest timbers or it would go to pieces under the strain. Sometimes the machines were so massive that it was a difficult matter to transport them. Richard the Lion-hearted is said to have had one that he called "Robinet" and that took up a whole ship in transport. Another, when it was taken down for moving, filled a hundred wagons.

A trained artilleryman of the old days could aim a trebuchet almost as accurately as cannon were fired in later times. It may even be that the trebuchet was long the more accurate of the two: at any rate we know that European trebuchets were used in the defense of cities at least as late as 1514, or long after the invention of cannon.

Some books on Chinese history say that the Polos were not the builders of the trebuchets that were used at the siege of Siangyangfu. Yet they all agree that such machines were especially made for the siege and all give different names to the builders. So Marco may as well be believed about it as any of the other writers. He was not quite accurate in his history, however, for all that, as Siangyangfu was not really the last city of Manzi to fall under the dominion of the Great Khan.

On their southward journey the travelers finally came to the small city of Sinju, which is now called Ichinghien. And there they found what they thought the largest of all rivers. Some of them called it the Balay, or Dalay; we find it marked on our maps as the Yang-tse-Kiang, and this name was also the one preferred by Marco Polo, for he calls it the "Quian," which sounds much the same. It "is the greatest river in the world," he says. "It is in some places ten miles wide, in others eight, in others six, and it is more than a hundred days' journey to go from one end of it to the other. . . . And I assure you that this river flows so far and goes through so many lands and cities that truly there pass along it many ships and more merchandise than on all the rivers and seas of Christendom. In fact it is more like a sea than a river!" Then the man who took the dictation of Marco's travels says in his own words: "Messer Marco Polo said that one time he saw at that city fifteen thousand vessels at one time. And you may imagine, if this small city has such a number, how many ships there must be on the river altogether; for you must not forget that on the banks of this river lie sixteen provinces and more, and more than two hundred great cities, besides towns and villages, and that all have vessels. Messer Marco Polo tells us . . . that there passed upstream two hundred thousand vessels in the year. . . ."

Southeast of Ichinghien, on the Yang-tse-Kiang, was another city, named "Caiju" or Kwachow. In this part of China lay the principal grain fields, and Kwachow was the port from which the grain was shipped to Cambaluc and the northern provinces. "You must know," Marco says, "that the emperor had a waterway made from this city to Cambaluc. It is wide and deep and is dug from river to river and from lake to lake, so that it is like a great river on which large boats can go. And there is communication all the way from this city of Caiju to Cambaluc so that large and fully laden vessels can go the whole way. A road is there also, for they threw up the earth dug from the channel to form an embanked road on both sides." A Persian writer, Rashiduddin, who lived at the same

time as Marco, tells us a little more about this great canal and its road: "Along the side of the canal runs the highway to Machin"—this is Canton—"extending over a forty days' journey. This road has been paved all the way so that travelers and animals may make the journey in the rainy season without sinking in mud." The journey must have been a very interesting one indeed, because, in all that distance from Cambaluc to Kwachow or to Canton, the travelers never got into open country. Rashiduddin says that "shops, taverns and villages line the road on both sides, so that there is one house after another, without any space between, for the whole distance of forty days' journey."

All these things the travelers saw; and their accounts do not generally give a wrong idea of what was to be found in this part of China. Some precipitous rock islands that stood in the Yang-tse-Kiang, crowned with temples, pagodas and other buildings, might have seemed to many Europeans too unusual to be real if they had merely heard of them from the accounts of Marco and the others. Perhaps they did seem unreal to the Europeans of that long past age; but modern travelers have found the islands and brought back pictures of them, and so we may believe that they are there, and that they were there long ago. A certain island had on it a building that contained one of the largest collections of Buddhist books in all China. This library was destroyed in a revolution in 1860, so that now it is only a memory. And though the rock is still there, a change in the course of the river has left it high and dry; all the ground about it is covered with cabbage gardens—or was, they say, at the time when the library was destroyed. And so the island itself, like the library, is only a memory. Four centuries after Marco's time an emperor of China came to visit this place; and then the name of "The Golden Isle" was given to it.

All that region seems unreal, to judge of it by the pictures that have been brought back by travelers. Probably, long ago, when Europeans first saw so many remarkable things, they had

a feeling that in the Orient almost nothing was impossible. That, at least, is the impression one gets from reading the accounts of the travelers. They heard many a strange tale of the regions that lay beyond the route they followed; and some of these tales they thought it worth while to repeat. Almost all of them write of such regions and of the things that were supposed to be found in them: "I did not see this myself; but I

An Island on the Yang-tse-Kiang

was told it by others who had been to that land." Only rarely does one of the writers throw any doubt on the fantastic tales he repeats; and often he will repeat it with all the air of saying that he believes it thoroughly. The author of the "Mandeville" was perhaps the least careful of all to verify the stories he had collected. One of them is the following, which

is about the upper reaches of the Yang-tse-Kiang, or the south-central part of China:

"That river goes through the Land of Pigmans, where the folk be of small stature. They are but three span tall; and they are right fair, and courteous—so far as they go—both the men and the women. And they marry and have children when they are half a year old. And they generally live but

The Golden Isle

six or seven years at the most; the one that lives eight years, they hold to be right passing old. These men be the best workers of gold, silver, cotton, silk, and all such, of any that be in the world. And often they have war with the birds of that country, that they capture and eat. This little race neither work the land nor care for the vineyards. But they have among them tall men, of our own size, who till the land

and labor among the vines for them. And they despise men of our size and consider them curiosities as much as we would giants, if giants lived among us."

Some of the other writers say that the birds against which the pygmies had to fight were cranes, and the old artists used to like to represent such fantastic battles, in the manuscripts and early printed books. But true stories and fairy tales seemed pretty much alike to many of those who went out into the Orient centuries ago. To-day no traveler will vouch for the pygmies, and we are free to believe that there never was such a race, either in China or anywhere else within the time since history has been written. The dwarf races that have been found in Africa and in the islands of the Pacific are by no means as small as "three span," or about twenty-seven inches, in height; and no such tales are told of their living but half a dozen years or so.

The legend about how the tribes of Gog and Magog were imprisoned by Alexander the Great has already been given here. It was a very old one; and when the travelers heard of a great wall with names sounding something like "Gog" and "Magog" connected with it they did not hesitate to bring King Alexander into their story. It was so, no doubt, in the matter of the pygmies. We may be almost sure that the Chinese had said that there was a race of people of small stature living toward the headwaters of the Yang-tse-Kiang. But there was a European legend dating away back to ancient Greek times that, somewhere in a distant part of the earth, lived a race of pygmies; and that these pygmies fought battles with cranes. In the version of the "Mandeville" that has been given, the pygmies conquer and eat their enemies, the cranes. But that was not the way of it in all the old accounts; sometimes the pygmies were supposed to be eaten. But it does not much matter, since the whole tale is pure myth. What does matter, and what makes the story interesting, is that it was based on an old legend that had been told in Europe from father to son for centuries and that it was put into the books

Pygmies and Cranes Fighting

of the travelers merely because it was suggested by some now forgotten Chinese tale about a people of less than usual size. The Europeans had such a legend; the Chinese must have said something that brought it back to the minds of the travelers; and so we find that the whole myth was given a new setting in the interior of China.

CHAPTER X

OF THE GREAT CITIES OF MANZI

All this part of China was so filled with remarkable things that one wonders why the old travelers should have thought it worth while to report any tales on mere hearsay. There was enough, without that, to fill all their readers with wonder. It seems that the habit that is developed in travelers of accepting many things they had never heard of as true, simply because they see many such things and can no longer deny that they are real, leads them also to accept tales that would be thought pure nonsense by those who stay at home. We are all the more inclined to make this excuse for them when we notice how they exaggerated about some of the places which they had actually seen, and which they knew that others would see again. In such cases they merely did what was done in the case of the pygmies: they accepted what some one or other told them, or else what they understood they were told, thinking, very likely, that nothing was impossible, after all, in that land of wonders.

That is the conclusion one has to come to in those parts of their books that tell of the great cities of Manzi. The travelers exaggerated about them sometimes. But sometimes —and generally—they told the truth; and modern visitors to those cities have decided that they did not really mean to misrepresent things even if, as we know, they surely did so in some cases. Here is an example of the almost unaccountable mixture of facts and legends that one has to get used to in reading the travelers. It is from Marco Polo's book and runs as follows:

"Suju is a very great and noble city. The inhabitants are idolaters. They are under the Great Khan and use paper money. They have much silk, and out of it they make gold brocade and other fabrics. They live by manufacture and trade.

"The city is wonderfully large; it is about sixty miles around it. There are very wealthy merchants and more people than you can count. In fact, if the men here and in the rest of Manzi were minded to be soldiers they could conquer the world. But they are no soldiers at all, only good tradesmen and very fine workmen. In this city there are also many philosophers and physicians who study nature carefully.

"You are to know that there are six thousand bridges in this city. All of them are stone, and they are so high that a ship, or even two ships at once, could go under them."

The route that Marco took, and some of the things that he tells us of the city, as well as the name he gives to it, make it certain that he is describing Suchow.

What he says of the paper money was no doubt true enough; for it was used everywhere in China in his time. What he says of the great amount of silk that was worked there was true also; for Suchow was in the silk-producing region. An old Chinese plan of the city shows two large government silk factories within the walls. Probably there were many other similar ones there, for in the modern Suchow thousands of people work in silk. Marco says that the city was some sixty miles around. To-day the walled part is three and a half miles one way by two and a half the other; that, being twelve miles in circuit, is only about one-fifth of what Marco said. So much difference could not be due to a mistake. On the other hand, in spite of the fact that his own people back in Venice thought that Marco did not mean to tell the truth always, we can hardly see why he would misrepresent the size of Suchow. There is only one explanation left, and it is that he was not speaking of the walled city merely, but meant to include the suburbs, in which much of the manufacturing and trading that he men-

tions took place. In other words, he may have been describing the commercial city instead of the walled city.

But there is no way of accounting for Marco's statement that there were in Suchow six thousand bridges of stone. Those who have been there in recent times say that there are a hundred and fifty to two hundred of these bridges. We ought to think charitably of Marco Polo, for he said so much that was, and still is, true, that we have no choice but to believe that he meant to tell the truth in all things. It will be remembered that he is said to have dictated his book; may it not be that the six thousand bridges of Suchow sprang up, as if by magic, merely out of a slip of the tongue on his part or out of a misunderstanding on the part of the one who took the dictation? However all that may be, we have to admit that his description of this city is much less exact than that of Pekin.

Yet Suchow was a most remarkable place, even if the reality there falls short of the description in some ways. Like many other towns in China it was laid down on the rectangular plan and was surrounded by both walls and water. But the rivers that supplied this water were not left to take their natural course, or even used for a moat merely, as was so often done in the European cities of the Middle Ages. At Suchow, very long ago, some one must have had a complete idea of how everything was to be carried out before anything of a permanent kind was built. That this was a custom in China, as in some other countries in past ages, we know from the example of Cambaluc. Probably Lhassa was another city that was planned before it was built; and China is full of others of the kind. Even in Europe, as has already been told in these pages, the idea of city planning was not unknown.

We may be quite sure that Suchow was a planned city, not only because the streets run at right angles—which always means planning—but because all the main streets were so built, and the houses fronting on them so set back, that a canal could flow alongside. There were a number of these canals running straight north and south from the outer moats,

while others go east and west. Bridges had to be built where these canals crossed the line of the streets. A plan of the city shows that two hundred such bridges might easily be necessary in a place as large as Suchow. No doubt Marco was right in saying that they were built of stone, for in all that part of China hewn stone was much used; and all who have seen the constructions that were made out of it say that they are perfect. Every part of the world has its favorite material for construction. Generally it is the one that is found in the region itself, and the wide use that was made of stone in the Suchow district shows that it did not have to be carried any great distance. Yet in a country of good waterways it might happen that stone would be brought from great distances; and all the eastern coast of China had harbors, rivers, and canals. In the very time when our travelers were there the European builders were making plenty of use of stone that was quarried at a distance from the spot where it was to be used in building; many of the churches and other great buildings of England were of stone that was brought overseas from the Norman quarries of France.

Marco speaks of the great height of the bridges of Suchow. Everyone who has seen pictures of Chinese bridges has noticed that at the middle they are much higher than at either end. Masonry bridges used to be built in Europe on much the same principle, although there the roadway over the bridge did not make such a sharp angle at the summit. It is because the Chinese bridges were built in this arching fashion that tall boats could go under them. Modern visitors to Suchow have noticed something even more remarkable about the bridges there: it is the width of the span between the piers that run down into the water and support the bridge. In some cases this span is as much as fifty to sixty feet. Such masonry has to be very carefully put together; it proves, even after this lapse of time, that the general use of stone in construction had developed very skillful workmen in Suchow.

There is a plan of the city, somewhat idealized perhaps,

that has been in the Confucian Temple of Suchow since 1247; no doubt Marco and others of the travelers may have seen it there. It is not a map drawn on paper or parchment but is carved in marble, and should outlast many times the seven centuries it has lain in the temple. There is such a map of ancient Rome that was much older, in 1247, than the one of Suchow is to-day. But it is not more beautiful. In the Chinese plan the waters, hills, lakes, and monasteries outside the town are shown, then the rivers running round about to serve as moats, and then the great wall with its towers, bastions, battlements, and gates. It is almost as much a picture as a map; and though it may not represent everything quite as it was in reality, still the care in execution and the minute detail in which everything is shown make of this marble plan a work of art, for it sets one to thinking about the city of Suchow—what it was really like, and the things that may have happened there. Once within the walls, the plan shows a city of marvels: canals running blue and straight from wall to wall, arched bridges everywhere, a Treasury, a Governor's Palace, the heavy walls of the Headquarters of the Military Commandant, the Imperial Silk Works, the Granary, the Temples of the God of Literature and of the God of Wealth, the City Temple, the Great Pagoda, the Taoist Temple of the Dragon King and that of the Confucians, the monastery called the Sui-Kwang and the Monastery of the Twin Pagodas, the palace of the Prefect—no end of names to conjure with and carven lines that set one to wondering who built that city.

But as the travelers pursued their way beyond Suchow they came to another city even larger and more marvelous. Odoric is sure that it is the largest city in the world. He calls it "Casay"; in the "Mandeville" it has a similar name, while another spelling, nearly the same, is in the book of Marco Polo. In reality, all these writers were trying to represent the sound of the Chinese "King-sze," which means "The Capital." This city was in fact the capital of all Manzi under Kubla Khan, and before his time had been the capital of the native Chinese

kings of that country. To-day—or at least until quite recently—the same term "King-sze" has been used on Chinese maps to indicate Pekin, because Pekin is the capital of China. It was equally so in the thirteenth century; but the Chinese kings of Manzi were quite fresh in the memory of people who lived then, and they were slow to give up the old name. On modern maps this "largest city in the world" is marked "Hangchow."

It seemed a most unusual place indeed, for it included not only the built-up part upon the streets and canals, but also outlying grounds containing many large buildings and parks and a lake that they estimated to be thirty miles in circumference. They gave various figures for the circuit of the entire town, including these outlying parts. Modern travelers do not find that the present Hangchow is as large as the thirteenth century ones believed it to be. At the same time, some who have gone over the city and its surroundings are inclined to think that perhaps there was formerly a great wall that included much more than the present one. Some of the old accounts say that the circuit of Hangchow then was a hundred miles; and it is possible, although not very probable, that it was really of some such size.

Odoric says one thing that helps us to believe that Hangchow might have given the impression of being a continuous city as large as it was reported to be: "This city has a number of suburbs and more inhabitants than any other city whatsoever. It has twelve main gates, and eight miles out from each of these is to be found a large city; and each of these outlying cities is larger than Venice. And from these gates I speak of the streets and suburbs are continuous as far as the outlying cities. So a man may walk there for six or seven days and still feel that he has made but little progress, since he has been all that time walking between city houses."

Both Odoric and Marco Polo say that in Hangchow there are no less than twelve thousand bridges. Marco says that he got this information from a letter written by the Queen of

Manzi "to send to the Great Khan, so that he might know how large the city was and not wish to destroy it." He does not say that he counted the bridges himself; but he might have said, at least, that the number did not seem to be so large. He vouches for it that the Queen told the truth in her letter. Less than a century ago some one did try to count the bridges in the whole district of Hangchow, and found traces of only some eight hundred; a modern map of the city itself shows only one hundred and eleven bridges. We have to come to the conclusion that Marco and others exaggerated much more in the case of Hangchow than they did in that of Suchow. The exaggeration seems still worse when they write that each of the bridges had over it a watch tower for the use of those who guarded the city. All that can be said is that the bridges and their towers, if so many of them ever really existed, have dwindled surprisingly in the six centuries that have gone by.

The bridge towers were to be seen at that time in Hangchow, although in smaller number than twelve thousand. We hear of this kind of building in other cities also, and we are reminded of the gate towers on the walls of Cambaluc. There was still another sort of tower to be seen everywhere; what we are told of it was undoubtedly true, for even to-day it is common in Chinese cities. It is a fire tower: not one where warnings of fire are sounded or water with which to fight it is stored, but a tower in which things may be placed for protection whenever a fire breaks out. These were built of stone, as they still are, at intervals all over the city. The dwellings themselves were of wood and other inflammable materials. For this reason a number of houses might be expected to go up in flames whenever a fire broke out. Because this was the rule, and was to be expected, the towers were put up for the benefit of any who might have time to carry their valuables that far before their own houses began to burn.

But the people were under a particular police restriction about going out of doors when there was a fire in their dis-

trict. It seems that they were not allowed to use their own judgment about carrying their possessions to the fire towers, but that they might do this only when the police gave them notice. Marco tells us about this in an interesting passage which shows that, in addition to the usual duties of patrolling the city, the police were entrusted with those of firemen: "If they see that any house has caught fire they at once beat on a board to sound the alarm. This brings the watchmen from the other bridges to help put out the fire and to save the goods of the merchants or others. This they do by carrying them to the towers I spoke of or by putting them in boats and taking them out to the islands in the lake. For no citizen is allowed to leave his house at night or to go to a fire at all. Only the owners of the property may be present, and the watchmen who come to help. And there may easily be more than a thousand or two of these watchmen at the fire." There was one high tower from which especially important alarms were sounded.

Fires have always been a great scourge in the cities of China and Japan, where so many of the dwellings are of light wood and paper or bamboo construction. It is said that in the Japanese city of Tokyo, before the last earthquake made the people favor more permanent and fire-resisting buildings, every day and every night was expected to pay its toll of a score or a hundred burning houses. The streets being generally narrow and the houses close together, it took some time to get a fire under control. A householder there hardly expected that his dwelling would remain standing more than a certain number of years, for sooner or later a fire was sure to sweep over it even if it should not start in the house itself. For this reason the very peculiar custom grew up of ordering the materials for a new house while the old one was still standing. This material, when it was contracted for, would be kept at the dealer's or elsewhere ready for delivery. In this way the owner of the house that had not yet burned, but that was expected to burn, would not have to wait his turn

to get fresh materials when the disaster should have come his way.

Of course, not all the buildings of Hangchow were of wood. On the contrary, as we might expect in so large a place, there were a great many mansions, palaces, and government offices that were of stone or other permanent material. An unusual number of these is mentioned by the travelers or shown on old maps, and we get the impression that Cambaluc itself, with all of its new architectural glory, could not be compared with the ancient city of the kings of Manzi.

The royal palace, although partly gone to ruin in Marco's time, still remained a most wonderful collection of buildings and gardens; its grandeur overshadowed that of Cambaluc and aroused the wonder of every one. "Furthermore," Marco says, "there is in this city the palace of the Emperor of Manzi who fled. That is the greatest palace in the world. I will tell you about it in detail. You are to know that its grounds are ten miles around and all shut in with high walls with battlements. Inside these walls are the finest and most charming of all the gardens of the earth; and they are filled with the best fruits. There are many fountains there, too, and lakes stocked with fish. In the center is the palace itself; and a vast and magnificent building it is. It has twenty great and fine halls; one of these is larger than the others and has room in it for a vast assemblage to dine. It is painted all over in gold, with representations of whole stories, of beasts and birds, knights and ladies—and many wonders! It is really very beautiful, for all over the walls and the ceilings you see nothing but golden paintings. In addition to these halls there are in the palace a thousand large, beautiful rooms, all of them painted in gold and various colors."

Such a splendid palace points to a tremendous income in taxes to the kings of Manzi who had built it. This income was in fact very large, for Manzi was a rich country; and its prosperity had not fallen away any since the Mongols had

taken it under their dominion. Marco says that he was sent to act as tax inspector of Hangchow by Kubla Khan and that he discovered that the yearly revenue there was unbelievably large. To give us an idea of the amount of produce used in Hangchow he says that a customs inspector there told him that more than nine thousand five hundred pounds of pepper, alone, were brought in every day for the use of those who lived there; "and that will help you to estimate what must be the quantity of provisions, such as meat, wine and groceries, that have to be provided."

The streets and canals of Hangchow were crowded all day long with people going hither and thither in carts, in boats or on foot. Sometimes goods were delivered to houses from the streets and sometimes the cargo boats would tie up on the canals to unload what was required. But everywhere there was incessant movement to and fro and everywhere loads of merchandise were to be seen. Somewhere within what was then considered the city proper, but in a district which to-day must lie far outside the walls, was a great canal, with a street running parallel to it; the canal and the street were no less than forty miles in length—if we are to believe what Marco says. We do not need to take him at his word, for everything that he tells us about Hangchow seems to be hearsay, however true some of it may be. But it is fair to think that there is some truth, at least, in this part of his account. In any event, many a European of the early fourteenth century did believe what was written by Marco and by the other travelers to the Orient; and so what lay along the forty-mile canal and street, according to Marco's report, was a part of the ideas of those people about Manzi and its great capital Hangchow. This is what he says:

"In this district are the ten main markets; there are a great many others, however, in other parts of the city. These main markets are all squares, each of their sides being half a mile long." The markets were certainly not so large as that, according to modern authors. "Along the front of these

squares runs the main street, forty paces wide." The "pace" we cannot estimate exactly, since in former times people used to measure the ground by paces of different lengths. About two and one-half feet represent the most usual pace; and this would make the street about one hundred feet in width. Elsewhere the travelers say that all of the streets of Hangchow were paved either with stone or with brick. And so this "Market Street" of Marco's would make such an avenue as is scarcely known anywhere in the modern world. We can easily imagine that if it is hard for us to conceive of such a street, it must have been much more so for the people of fourteenth century Europe. If they accepted the statement as true, China must surely have been to them a land of wonders. Marco goes on: "This street runs straight from one end of the city to the other, crossing many bridges that are easy to reach." What he means here must be that the bridges are quite wide and that they do not bend up into the air at too sharp an angle to be suitable to heavy traffic. A bridge with the width of one hundred feet—that of the street itself—would have been unheard-of before modern times.

"Every four miles along this street comes one of those great squares, each two miles around, as we have said before. Parallel to this great street, but behind the market places, there is a very large canal. Between this and the squares are large stone buildings where the merchants from India and other foreign countries store their goods, so as to have them near the markets.

"In each of the squares a market is held three days out of the week. Forty to fifty thousand people are to be found at each of these, bringing every possible commodity to sell. In this way there is always on hand ample meat and game, as, for example, roebuck, red-deer, fallow-deer, hares, rabbits, partridges, pheasants, francolins, quails, chickens, capons, ducks and geese—an infinite quantity! For of geese and ducks so many are bred on the lake that for the value of a silver groat of Venice you may have a brace of the first and two

brace of the second. Then there are the slaughter-houses, where the larger animals are slaughtered, such as calves, oxen, kids and lambs; and these are eaten by the rich people and by the high officers and magistrates."

Not far from Hangchow some of the travelers tell us that there were white chickens, with bright red crests, and with wool in place of feathers! One Arabian says that he saw some the size of ostriches. There is no chicken of that size. But there are very large ones in China. In particular there is a breed that has feathers which divide into many very small points, all white and resembling wool much more than feathers. But Marco does not say that they were sold in Hangchow. Perhaps they were not. Perhaps, on the other hand, he may have forgotten them when he was dictating or have felt that he had described enough marvels without talking of woolly hens the size of geese, or larger. But these fowls are known to scientists, who give them the name of *Gallus lanatus* or *Gallus japonicus*. Why they are called *Gallus japonicus* it is hard to see; for they are found in India and in China as well as in Japan.

Marco ends his description of the markets of Hangchow as follows: "All along the main street that we have talked about, both sides, from one end of the city to the other, are lined with houses and with great palaces and their gardens. Between these are the houses of different kinds of craftsmen. The throng of people that you see here at all times, going this way and that on their business, is so vast that nobody would believe provisions enough for them could be brought together unless the squares were seen on market-day all crowded to overflowing with buyers and with traders who have brought in supplies either by land or by water. And everything that these traders bring in is sold."

But the people of Hangchow did not work all of the time. They were a very handsome race of Chinese, as everybody found. The author of the "Mandeville" thought it rather strange, though, that the men of the country had only fifty

hairs on each side of their mustaches; but even he admits that these mustaches were very long! The fact is that, at least until very recent times, the men and women of Hangchow were renowned as lovers of luxury, excellent food, beautiful silk clothing, and all the other things that go to make up a pleasant, care-free life. The Chinese had a story, long ago, to the effect that in Hangchow you never could tell a rich man from a poor one; for even the poor went well dressed, though they might have to exchange all their worldly belongings besides for the silk garments they liked so much to wear. Another saying was that Hangchow was the city where money melted away in no time.

The merchants and master craftsmen never thought of doing any work beyond that of supervising their helpers. And, in spite of the well recognized danger of fire, they spent a great deal in making their houses beautiful. The wives of these wealthier merchants and manufacturers lived quite after the fashion of princesses.

When the day's work was over—or rather, when the merchants were through watching their helpers work—those who could afford it liked to make excursions around the city. Sometimes the whole family would go along; and the custom was so general that the streets, canals and lakes were always full of merrymakers in the late afternoon. There were two favorite ways of going on these excursions. One was to hire a large carriage holding six persons or so and have it driven to some agreeable spot in or near the city. These carriages, Marco says, "are long covered vehicles, fitted with curtains and cushions, and holding six people. They are much used by ladies and gentlemen going out for their amusement. In these carriages they go to certain gardens where they are received by those who have built pavilions for this purpose." Public carriages of this sort went out of fashion in China at about the time, it is said, when similar ones became popular in European countries; that was about the sixteenth century. But some were to be found in China, especially in the northern

part, in the last century. At that time they were of much the same form as that described by Marco, although generally smaller. The body was covered and lined with blue cloth, and there were black curtains for greater comfort. Some centuries after the time of the descriptions that are reported the roads of China were no longer kept in repair, and it is thought that then the use of carriages went out of fashion for a time.

Perhaps the Mongols themselves had something to do with the fine condition of the Chinese roads in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Of course, Kubla Khan and the other Mongol emperors were entirely responsible for their being kept in order, since they were absolute monarchs and nothing could be done without their consent. But the Mongols, it will be remembered, were great lovers of vehicles: the huge ones that they built to transport their tent-houses over the steppes show that very clearly. Then the desire to establish good means of rapid communication both for political and for military reasons would in itself be enough to make them keep the Chinese roads in repair, or even to build new ones.

There was a particular type of street in Hangchow which may have been a Chinese invention or a Mongol one—it is hard to say which. But it is interesting because we find it to-day in European cities. In this type of roadway the stone or brick paving that has already been mentioned did not cover all the breadth of the street. A part of it was covered, not with paving blocks, but with fine gravel. Originally this gravel band was left for the benefit of the imperial messengers, who had to ride at great speed, and who could not have done this if their horses had always had to run on pavements. But in Hangchow, which was built in a low, marshy plain, some sort of protection against water had to be made along the roads. For this reason the gravel band—which must have resembled our macadam—was laid over an arch of tile or masonry that would carry off the water and leave the gravel itself hard and firm. In parts of the United States

half of the width of a road will sometimes be found paved with concrete and the other half left unpaved, so that in wet weather vehicles may profit by the pavement, while at other times the horses—where there are any—may have easier going over the soft roadway.

The canals and the lake, too, were favorite places for excursionists. Marco gives us quite a pleasant picture of how they were made use of by the people for their diversion. "On the lake I told you of there are many boats and barges of all sizes for pleasure parties. These boats hold ten, fifteen, twenty, or even more people. They are from thirty-five to fifty feet long, with flat bottoms and very broad, so that they never rock. Any one who wishes to go out, either with men or with ladies, may hire one of these boats; for they are always to be found, fitted up with tables and chairs and everything that is needed for a feast. The roof forms a flat deck; and on this the crew stand and pole the boat wherever they are told, for the lake is only four or five feet deep. The interior of the boat is painted in bright colors, and there are windows all around. . . .

"A trip on this lake is surely a more charming amusement than can be had on land. For the city stretches along the lake its entire length, so that those who look at it from the barges well out from land can enjoy the whole of the beauty and grandeur of the view, with the innumerable palaces, temples, monasteries, and gardens with their tall trees sloping down to the shore. And the lake is never without many such boats with their pleasure parties. For the citizens here delight in passing the afternoon in enjoyment after the day's work."

The lake was certainly the great pleasure place of Hangchow. All around it were the palaces of the nobles and the mansions of the rich merchants and magistrates, each built in the most elaborate fashion and surrounded by gardens. Here and there a monastery might be seen; and perhaps these were even more imposing and beautiful than the palaces, for

ancient and wealthy communities of monks were common in China and their monasteries were often real monuments of architecture.

Not only was the view from the lake beautiful, but it was arranged in such a way that those who wished to enjoy it would lack no material comfort that can make an outing more pleasant. "In the center of the lake," Marco says, "there are two islands. On each of these stands a large and fine building furnished so richly that you would think it the palace of an emperor. And when a citizen wishes to hold a marriage feast, or any other entertainment, it will take place in one of these buildings. Everything that could be needed is kept there: silver, plates, dishes, napkins, tablecloths—everything. The king made this arrangement to please the people and opened the buildings to all who wish to offer entertainment. Sometimes a hundred different parties would be holding banquets in these palaces; and yet every one of these parties would have good accommodations in the halls or in pavilions built outside. And this would be arranged so well that one party never interfered with any other."

The silverware that is mentioned in this description is not exactly what we should expect; for when we think of China we commonly think of porcelain plates and bowls and of wooden or ivory chopsticks. Silver and tablecloths do not enter into our picture of Chinese banqueting customs. Perhaps Marco may have been wrong about the tablecloths. But old accounts of Chinese manners do tell us that silver ladles, bowls and saucers were used in past times, and particularly in Hangchow—that "melting-pot for money," as it was called by the Chinese from other parts of the country.

For those who like to have everything in keeping with what is supposed to be usual in a far-off land a bit of the account of Ibn Batuta will be of interest. For he describes a sort of tableware that is typically Oriental. It is probably still made in several eastern countries, but Ibn Batuta, who was in the Orient at about the same time as Marco and Odoric, says

that this ware was then a particularly distinctive product of the city of Hangchow. Ibn Batuta came across it in one of the divisions—or "cities," as he calls them—of which Hangchow was composed. He had found that various nationalities and classes of people were assigned to the different quarters. At last he came into what he calls the "Chinese city"; and there he found the factories where bowls of the peculiar sort he describes were made. His account runs as follows:

"The next day we entered the gate of the fifth city, which is the largest of the six and is the city of the Chinese. In it are magnificent shops and fine workmen. . . . Among the excellent things made here are the plates and other dishes . . . composed of cane. The cane fibers are woven together in a wonderful way and then covered with a brilliant coat of red lacquer. Ten of these pieces make up a set; and they are so carefully made that when you see them you would take all of them together for a single piece. Then they put a cover over the pile. They make large trays, too, of this same sort of cane-work. Some advantages of these dishes are that they do not break when they are dropped and that you can put hot things into them without spoiling their color or harming them in any way. This sort of ware is exported from China to India, to Khorassan, and to other countries."

That is about all the definite information that has been left to us by the old travelers concerning the great city of Hangchow. How wonderful they thought it we may judge from a statement made by several of them that Hangchow was called by the Chinese "The City of Heaven." They were mistaken about that. The Chinese did not call Hangchow by that name; but they had a way of referring to it in a little verse they had invented which made the Europeans think that they did. In Chinese, it is said, this verse runs as follows:

Shang yeu t'ien t'ang, Hia yeu Su Hang!

That has been translated into English in this way:

There's Paradise above, 'tis true;
But here below we've Hang and Su!

In other words, the Chinese merely meant that Suchow and Hangchow were very fine cities for those who could not be in Paradise. But more than one of the old writers said that they called Suchow "The City of the Earth" and Hangchow "The City of Paradise."

After a number of days' journeying the travelers came, through other populous cities, to the great port of "Zayton" on the "Outer Ocean." The "Outer Ocean," we know, was the Pacific. Just what city "Zayton" was is hard to say. But it was probably one of the modern ones called Tswanchow and Changchow, which lie not far from Hongkong.

Here they put off for India and their own countries of the West in one of the great Chinese junks that have been mentioned. These will be described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XI

OF THE ISLANDS OF THE SOUTH

Whether "Zayton," the port from which the travelers sailed southward, was Tswanchow or Changchow, it is certain that it was very large, and with a harbor in which hundreds of ships might always be seen. Zayton, too, was a place where a certain kind of silk fabric was woven. It is likely enough, although no one has been able to prove it beyond doubt, that this particular fabric was the one we now call "satin," and that it took its name from the city of Zayton.

But we may leave the name and location of the city for the time being—only feeling, as any one must, that it is strange that such an important place should never have been identified with any certainty. For this was the principal port of all those in the kingdom of Manzi—and probably of the whole of China.

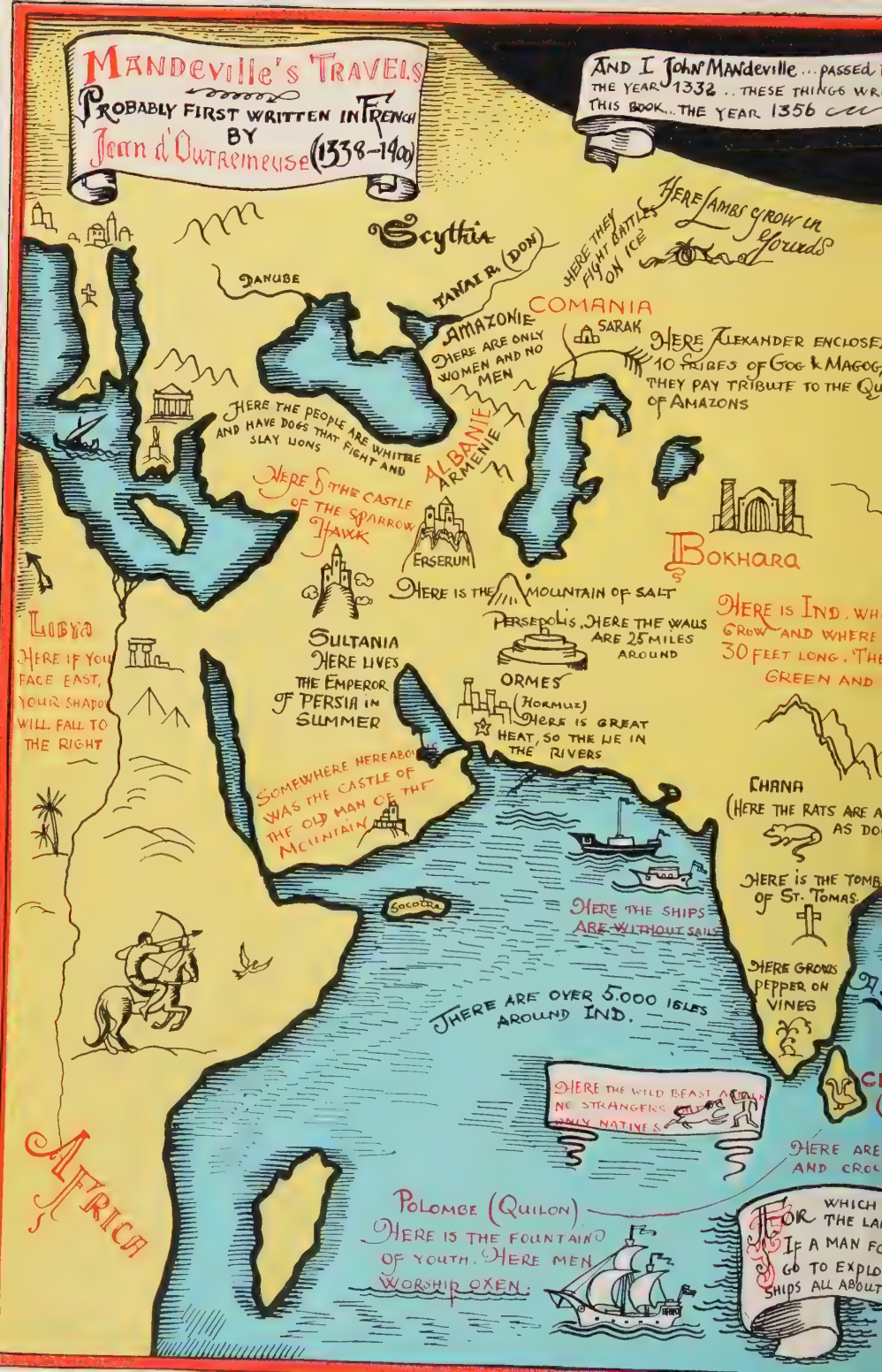
We hear of foreign merchants there; and it may well be that some of those from India were accustomed to come in their own ships, for we know that there was a great trade between India and China. Merchants from Europe sometimes sailed into the harbor of Zayton, either in junks or in Indian or in Arabic or Persian ships. That European merchants did go there we may feel sure if we put any faith in the old accounts of the city. We may feel sure, too, that if they did, it was not in their own ships, for the Cape of Good Hope route to the East was not yet discovered, nor had the Suez Canal been built; so there was no way by which European ships could get to China. In Greek and Roman times there had been a water passage from the Mediterranean and Nile

to the Red Sea, and thence to all the Orient. But that had long been blocked up.

Most of the shipping in the harbor of Zayton was composed of Chinese vessels. These were of several types and ranged in size from the small craft built for the rivers and canals to the great vessels called junks that made the long-course voyage to India, or even to Persia. Several of the travelers give interesting descriptions of these ships. Perhaps the most picturesque is the one by Ibn Batuta, which runs as follows:

"Each of the great ships has from twelve to three sails. These are made of bamboo laths that are woven together to make a sort of matting. They never lower these sails, but brace them this way or that according to the direction of the wind. When the ships are at anchor they let the sails fly loose. Every ship has a crew of a thousand men—six hundred of them being sailors and four hundred soldiers; these are archers, shield-men, and crossbowmen who shoot missiles of flaming naphtha. Every great ship has three others: these are called 'The Half,' 'The Third,' and 'The Quarter.'

"These vessels are built only at Zayton in China and at Sinkalan. This is how they are built: They build two walls of timber and bind these together with very thick wooden slabs each three cubits long, and spike all this firmly together. When the two walls are joined by the slabs they put on the planking at the bottom of the keel. When the work is so far along they launch the ships. The slabs that project from the sides towards the water are used by the crew to go down to wash and so on. Into these slabs are fitted the oars, which are as large as masts, and are pulled by from fifteen to twenty men each. There are about twenty of these great oars, and the rowers at each oar stand in two ranks facing one another. Strong cables are fastened to these oars. Each rank pulls at one of these and then lets go, alternately with the other rank. These rowers have a pleasant chant that they sing at their work, which runs 'La La! La La!' The three tenders that


MANDEVILLE'S TRAVELS
PROBABLY FIRST WRITTEN IN FRENCH
BY
Jean d'Outremeuse (1338–1400)
AND I JOHN MANDEVILLE ... PASSED
THE YEAR 1332 .. THESE THINGS WR
THIS BOOK .. THE YEAR 1356
Scythia
HERE THEY FIGHT BATTLES ON ICE
HERE LAMBS GROW IN GOURDS
DANUBE
TANAI R. (DON)
AMAZONIE
HERE ARE ONLY WOMEN AND NO MEN
COMANIA
SARAK
HERE ALEXANDER ENCLOSED
10 TRIBES OF GOG & MAGOG
THEY PAY TRIBUTE TO THE QU
OF AMAZONS
HERE THE PEOPLE ARE WHITE
AND HAVE DOGS THAT FIGHT AND
SLAY LIONS
ALBANIE
ARMENIE
HERE IS THE CASTLE OF THE SPARROW HAWK
ERSERUM
BOKHARA
HERE IS THE MOUNTAIN OF SALT
PERSEPOLIS. HERE THE WALLS ARE 25 MILES AROUND
HERE IS IND, WH
GROW AND WHERE
30 FEET LONG. 'TH
GREEN AND
LIBYA
HERE IF YOU FACE EAST, YOUR SHADO
WILL FALL TO THE RIGHT
SULTANIA
HERE LIVES THE EMPEROR OF PERSIA IN SUMMER
ORMES
(HORMUZ)
HERE IS GREAT HEAT, SO THE WE IN THE RIVERS
SOMEWHERE HEREABOU
WAS THE CASTLE OF
THE OLD MAN OF THE
MOUNTAIN
CHANA
(HERE THE RATS ARE A
AS DO
HERE IS THE TOMB
OF ST. THOMAS
SOCOTRA
HERE THE SHIPS ARE WITHOUT SAILS
HERE GROWS PEPPER ON VINES
THERE ARE OVER 5.000 ISLES AROUND IND.
HERE THE WILD BEAST
NO STRANGERS
ONLY NATIVES
HERE ARE
AND CRO
AFRICA
POLOMBE (QUILON)
HERE IS THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH. HERE MEN WORSHIP OXEN.
WHICH
THE LA
IF A MAN FO
GO TO EXPLO
SHIPS ALL ABOUT

THE LAND OF DARKNESS

THE PERILOUS VALE THAT IS FULL
IS . THERE IS TREASURE THERE, BUT
NO GET IN TO GET IT EVER COME OUT
EY ARE STRANGLED BY THE
. AND IN THIS VALE IS A
OF NAKKARS AND TRUMPET
ERE IS A HEAD IN STONE,
THE SHOULDERS UP LIKE A HEAD
OF A DEVIL
IN ITS NARROWEST
MILES WIDE
CATHAY
HERE IS THE LAND OF THE PYGMIES 3 FEET
TALL, WHO MARRY AT 1/2 YEAR OF AGE . THEY
LIVE TO BE 8 OR AT MOST 8. THEY ARE
ALWAYS AT WAR WITH THE CRANES
OF THAT LAND.
menke
HERE ARE THE GREAT
WHITE SHIPS
MANCY
HERE DWELL THE DOG-
HEADED FOLK
THESE LANDS ARE IN THE
DOMINION OF
PRESTER JOHN
HERE THE KING HAS 14.000
WAR ELEPHANTS
HERE ARE SNAILS SO
LARGE THAT SEVERAL
PEOPLE CAN GET INTO A
SINGLE SHELL.
VOYAGE
Sumoboa
Sumatra
Java
HERE GROW SPICES
MAY WELL PERCEIVE THAT
SEA BE OF ROUND SHAPE
AGES BY SHIPS THAT WOULD
ORLD MEN MIGHT GO BY
AROUND AND BENEATH
HERE MEN FIND PRECIOUS
STONES THAT GROW ON THE
ROOTS OF GREAT TREES.
W.L.

were mentioned have oars too, and tow the great ships when it is necessary. . . .

"The captain is a very great person. When he lands, the archers and negro slaves march before him with spears, swords, drums, horns and trumpets."

Ibn Batuta says that the junks had four decks. Marco cuts the number down to one, and also mentions fewer mariners. But he makes out the junks to be huge affairs, for all that, and says that the single deck will have on it as many as fifty or sixty cabins, which are reserved by travelers separately so that every one has a cabin to himself.

He also gives us some further information about the construction of the junks. They were built of pine, he says. We know that this was probably so, as pine is still much used, and even exported, in that part of China. The material is not the strongest that could be imagined, but Friar Jordanus, another traveler, says that the timbers did not all run one way, but that the hull was formed of several walls so built that the timbers of each ran crosswise to those of the others. Marco says that the lime waterproofing that has already been mentioned was used instead of pitch to calk these timbers.

The Chinese junk builders had a curious way of repairing these thick hulls. When a ship was damaged on a voyage the outside of the hull was waterproofed anew and another wall of timber built around all. This was repeated whenever necessary until the junk came to have six walls. After that it ceased to be used for long-course voyages and was put into the coastwise service.

There was another peculiarity of these great craft which shows that the Chinese marine architects were in advance of the Europeans of the time in one important matter. The junks, like many modern European or American ships, were built with water-compartments. That is, there were watertight walls running from one side of the ship to the other; Marco says that these walls generally formed some thirteen compartments. In case the ship should spring a leak only one

of these compartments would probably draw water. The cargo would then be taken out of that part and the leak stopped, without any harm having been done to the rest of the goods and without any danger that the ship would sink while the work was being done.

We know, in addition to all this, that the junks were square-ended, flat-bottomed craft that were less easily managed than more modern European sailing ships. But in the thirteenth and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries the Chinese junks were far larger than any other known ships. And, if they were not very manageable, they seem at least to have had the great merit of being able to weather storms, for we know that they went regularly to Ceylon; and that is sometimes a very hard voyage to make, even for modern steamers.

In the port of Zayton there were stories to be heard of a great island kingdom in the Outer Ocean. It was Zipangu, and though the Chinese and Mongols knew it very well, they had no settled relations with the people there. For there had been fighting, in which the soldiers of the Great Khan had not been too successful. And so the people of the mainland were inclined to stay away from the island kingdom. It was Japan, a country which first became well known to Europeans long after, in the sixteenth century, when Christian missionaries risked their lives—and often lost them—in trying to spread their faith among the Japanese.

Our travelers were not bound in that direction, however, even if the Chinese mariners had been inclined to take them there. Their way led toward the spice islands of the south, to Java, to Ceylon, to India and to Persia.

There is an old tale that the Chinese mariners as far back as the days of our travelers used a compass to steer the course of their great ships. Perhaps they did, for Arabian sailors may have had the compass at an even earlier time. But no one has quite proved to everybody's satisfaction just where or when the compass was invented and when it was first used by navigators. Perhaps the Chinese sea captains guided their

ponderous ships by the stars, simply, as mariners had done time out of mind. We do know, though, that the compass has now been in use in China for a long time and that, in the earliest Chinese type of the instrument, a little carven image was so mounted on the needle that it pointed to the south instead of the north—the real point of attraction. Yet we may imagine, in spite of this misunderstanding, that if the Chinese mariners had the compass at all they were surely intelligent enough to make as good use of it as men of any other race.

The southern voyage first brought the travelers to the kingdom of Champa. It was under the rule of a native king but, so Marco says, each year paid a tribute of twenty great elephants to Kubla Khan for the half-independence it enjoyed. This kingdom of Champa was probably about the same territory as the modern Cochin-China. It was famous for the great elephants that were raised there, for its incense of eaglewood and its ebony, from which chessmen were made. Jean d'Outremeuse and Friar Odoric tell of great snails that were to be seen there, with shells so big that several men might climb into them. We know of no such snails anywhere; perhaps these writers had seen or heard of some huge tortoise carved in stone and took their story from that unusual sight. For such statues or monuments are known in the East. It was said, too, that every year multitudes of fish swam out of the South China Sea and threw themselves upon the shores of Champa as a tribute of self-sacrifice to the king of that country, whom they greatly admired.

Borneo was the next land in the way of the south-bound travelers; but it was little known to Europeans. They have more to tell us about Sumatra and Java; but even then their information was scanty and half fabulous. Of course, there had been no careful exploration of these islands and they may be excused for mixing up what was true of one with what they had to say about the other. For example, Java was to them the largest of all the islands of the world. We can pardon

them for not knowing the size of Borneo; but it is harder to see why they had not learned, either from their own voyages or from those who sailed there year in and year out that Sumatra is far larger than Java. Yet they stuck to their idea that Java was the largest of all islands, and some of them even called Sumatra "Java the Less."

The King of Java had kept his island independent of the Great Khan, whereas Sumatra was said to be tributary to the Mongol emperors. For this reason, perhaps, as well as because Java was thought to be so large, it was necessary that the king of that country should have a very imposing palace. It was supposed to be a very elaborate one indeed. The steps and pavements in particular are mentioned more than once: they were of gold and silver! There were other marvelous things in this land. Some of them were far too marvelous to be believed: for example, it was reported that precious stones grew upon certain roots and might be had for the pains of a little digging. But Java was first of all a spice island, and what was said about the cubeb, pepper and spikenard, and about the camphor, both there and in Sumatra, we may believe.

The sago or bread tree of Sumatra interested the travelers very much. The manner in which it was utilized is described in this way:

"They take off the outer bark of the tree, which is thin. And then comes the wood of the tree, which extends inward for about three inches. Inside this is nothing but a flourlike pith. . . . The trees are so thick that it takes two men to reach around one of them. They put the pith into tubs of water and beat it up with a stick. Then the bran and other impurities come to the top, while the pure flour sinks to the bottom. Then they throw away the water, and the clean flour that remains is made into a paste formed in strips or otherwise. This Messer Marco often ate; and he brought some of it home with him to Venice. It is something like barley bread and has a taste like it. The wood of this tree is like

iron; for if you throw it into the water it goes straight to the bottom. But it can be split straight from one end to the other, like cane. When the flour has been taken out there remains, as we said, a three-inch thickness of wood. Of this wood the people make short lances. But they do not make long ones of it because it is so heavy that no one could carry or handle a long lance of the material. One end they sharpen and char in the fire; and when the lances are prepared in this way they will pierce any armor much better than iron will do." There is a little confusion in this description, for the sago tree that is most used for its flour has not the hard shell of lancewood. But the lancewood tree is a variety of sago and does produce a very little flour. In their short stay in Sumatra it is no wonder that the travelers should have thought that the two varieties of sago were the same.

Sumatra was divided into a number of states and something is told of each of them. The most of this can well be passed over. Here and there we find something of particular interest, however—as, for example, the description of the sago tree. Again, in the western part of Sumatra—which was called the kingdom of Lambri—the people were said to have tails like those of dogs. This is of no interest as a statement of fact, for we have no reasons for believing any such story. But it has a certain interest in another way. We have noticed before, in following the old travelers in their eastern wanderings, that they often attached some legend of the West to a given Oriental district where something similar was suggested to them. It was so of the Great Wall beyond Cambaluc where King Alexander shut up the tribes of Gog and Magog—a legend that we shall find repeated again later on, when we come to the Caspian Sea. It was so also of the pygmy nations who had battles with cranes. This story of the tailed men of the kingdom of Lambri is just such another legend. It had first been told as true a long time before by the geographers of Greece; and the travelers may have come across several similar legends regarding those parts of the world, believed

in and repeated by writers of Oriental nations. The apes and monkeys of the Lambri region may have made the travelers ready to think that there were tailed people there. Yet Marco, who repeats the story along with others, says that the mummies of tiny "men" that had sometimes been sent into the West were not men at all, but merely monkeys that had been cleverly embalmed.

There was another story that was pure myth. The royal arms of England, and many other heraldic devices, still bear evidence to it—the legend of the unicorn. How the idea of this fabulous beast originated it would be hard to say, for there is nothing in nature that definitely suggests this deer-like, delicate creature with the single long, tapering horn projecting from the middle of its forehead. The legends of its actions, too, are hard to trace. One of these was that it could be caught only by a girl who, if she were to go out alone to its haunts, would be able to approach it, whereupon it would lay its head dutifully in her lap and might so be caught.

It is very interesting to read what Marco has to say about the unicorn. First, he tells us that there are many elephants in Sumatra—which is true—and then, that there are also "numerous unicorns, which are very nearly as big. They have hair like that of a buffalo, feet like those of an elephant, and a horn in the middle of the forehead, which is black and very thick. They do no harm with the horn, however, but only with the tongue, for this is covered with long, hard thorns; and when the unicorns are angry they hold their victim under their knees and grate him with their tongue. These unicorns like very much to stay in the mud. It is a very ugly beast to look at and is not at all like the one our stories say is caught in the lap of a virgin. In fact, it is altogether different from what we thought it." That is another example of Marco's loyal efforts to find a place for the truth among the teeming legends of his day. But naturalists do not make much of this particular description of Marco's: for it happens that the rhinoceros of Sumatra—and it is the rhinoceros he is describ-

ing under the name of "unicorn"—has two horns instead of one.

In this island of Sumatra some of the travelers observed what seemed to them a very curious fact: that the polar star was not visible in those regions. Jean d'Outremeuse, who probably had never been there himself, makes out, from the various accounts of this that he had seen, a theory that is of the greatest interest to us. Jean d'Outremeuse believed that the world is spherical in shape, just as we do; and he held this opinion, and tried to prove its truth, a century and a half before Columbus set out from Spain to reach India by the Atlantic route. Many of the ancient geographers, long before Odoric, Marco, or Jean d'Outremeuse, had recognized that the world is round. But that was a truth long lost sight of at the beginning of the fourteenth century. For this reason some of what Jean d'Outremeuse has to say ought to be given here; for it no doubt represents the arguments that were later on accepted by Columbus when he set out to reach India by going westward. Jean d'Outremeuse says about Sumatra:

"Neither in that land nor in others beyond can any man see the polar star, the one that is called the Star of the Sea, or by us the Lodestar, the one that is immovable in the North. And just as mariners with us take their bearings and steer by the Lodestar, just so do the mariners of those parts steer by the Southern Star, which we cannot see here. . . . For this reason men may clearly perceive that the land and the sea are of round shape and form: for a portion of the firmament that is visible in one country is not visible in another country. And men may prove by experience and by inventive genius that if there were ships to go exploring in they could go all around the world, both above and beneath. . . .

"And ye well wot that after that I may understand that the lands of Prester John, the Emperor of India, are beneath us. For in going from Scotland or from England toward Jerusalem men go upward always. For our land is in the low part of the earth towards the West. And the land of Prester John

is in the low part of the earth towards the East, and there they have day when we have night. . . .

"And therefore hath it befallen many times, a thing that I have heard told when I was young: A worthy man once went out from our countries to rove over the world. And so he passed India and the isles beyond . . . and so far around the world, through many lands, that he came to an isle where he heard his own language spoken. For there he heard them calling out to oxen at the plow such words as men speak to beasts in his own country.

"At this he was greatly astonished; for he knew not how that might be. But I say that he had gone so far by land and by sea that he had gone clean around the earth so that he was then coming always nearer to his own country. . . .

"But he turned away again to the direction whence he had come; and so it was that he lost much painful labor, as he himself said long after he had come back again to his home. For after that it befell that he went to Norway where a tempest on the sea bore him along until he came to an island. And when he came to that island he knew well that it was the one where he had heard his own language spoken before. It was the land where he had heard them calling to the oxen at the plow. And that was quite possible.

"But it seems to the simple and unlearned that men may not go under the earth; and also that men should fall toward the heavens from under. But that could be on no less cause than we should have for falling towards heaven from the earth where we be. For, wherever on the earth men dwell, either above or beneath, it seems always to them that they go more upright than any other folk."

From Lambri, at the western end of Sumatra, the route to India brought the travelers first to the isles of Necuveran—the Nicobar group on modern maps. "In this island," Marco says—for apparently he saw only one of them—"they have no king nor chief, but live like beasts." Valuable woods and

spices were to be found there, but there was nothing else of interest.

Angamanain was one of the names that were given to the Andaman Islands, lying a little farther along on the route toward India. Some of the travelers confused them with the Nicobar group, and the amazing story of Marco's that will be given in a moment was sometimes told with reference to the Nicobars. There is little doubt that this story originated out of a sort of fear or wonder that was aroused in the Indian or Arabian mariners by the projecting mouths of the natives of the Andamans. But the story of a dog-headed people is a very ancient one and it had been applied, long before the times of our travelers, to various races in different parts of

The Dog-Headed People

the world. Civilized or barbaric nations were prone to describe those who were less advanced as doglike, or as having dogs' heads; and this legend was repeated, here and there, from the most ancient times, and from eastern Europe to China, as well as in the seas around India. Marco tells us the following:

"Angamanain is a very large island. The people are without a king and are idolaters and no better than wild beasts. And I assure you that all the men of this island of Angamanain have heads like dogs, and teeth and eyes to match. In fact, in the face they are all just like big mastiff dogs. They have a quantity of spices. But they are a most cruel people and eat everybody not of their own race whom they can catch. They live on meat, rice and milk and have fruits that are different from any of ours.

"Now that I have told you about this race of people, as indeed it was highly proper to do in this our book, I will go on and tell you about an island called Seilan, as you shall hear." "Seilan" is, of course, Ceylon. We shall follow Marco and the others there in the next chapter.

But before leaving the Andamans we ought to notice that Marco's description of the inhabitants as being no better than wild beasts was modified by other writers. For some of them say that there was a great king over all the islands thereabouts, with princes subject to him. And the pictures that were made by European artists of the dog-headed people did not generally represent mere savages, but a race that wore fine clothes and engaged in the pursuits of civilized nations.

Jean d'Outremeuse tells us of still other monsters that were to be found in the Andamans:

"In one of these isles there be folk that are huge, like giants; and they are hideous to look upon and have but one eye, and that is in the middle of the forehead. And they eat nothing but raw meat and raw fish. And in another isle towards the south dwell folk of foul stature and cursed kind. They have no heads, and their eyes are in their shoulders.

And their mouths are crooked like a horseshoe and in the middle of their chests. And in another isle there are folk that have no heads; and their eyes and their mouths are behind, in their shoulders. . . . And in another isle there are folk of foul fashion and shape, with the upper lip so large that when they sleep in the sun they cover their whole face with that lip. . . . And in another isle there are folk that have horse-hoofs. And they are strong and mighty, and swift runners; for they catch wild beasts on the run and eat them." All these stories, like that of the dog-headed folk, had been told long before of other regions than the Andamans.

The Relics of Adam

CHAPTER XII

THE FOUR RIVERS OF PARADISE

Ceylon, in the time of our travelers, was the most important place of meeting for Europeans and people from the Far East. It had been so for over a thousand years. In the early days of the Phœnician and Greek ships it was usual to make any long sea voyage within constant sight of land. The small size of the ships was one reason for this; but the fact that the mariners had no compass at that time was another. Thus they lost sight of land as little as possible, almost never doing so deliberately. The result was that, although their ships might perhaps have weathered severe storms on the high seas, the mariners had a terror of venturing there, for the very reason that they did not know what might await them. All of the sea lore of ancient Greek mythology is full of weird tales of monsters, storms, blackness, and evil signs and por-

tents. The boundaries of the world itself were somewhere out beyond the skyline of the ocean, they thought. It was well to keep near the friendly land. For the land and its harbors were truly friendly, even though the mariners might have to fight savage tribes the moment they dropped anchor. That way of navigating the seas continued for centuries to be the only one.

Then, about a half-century after the beginning of the Christian era, a wonderful discovery was made. In those days the Roman government used to collect taxes from the Arabian and Persian mariners who navigated in the Red Sea and from there around the southeast shoreline that brought them eventually to India. The tax collector in chief for this region was a certain Roman named Annius Plocanus. He did not collect directly for the government, but for himself, having paid into the Roman treasury a certain sum in return for the authorization to collect. Under this arrangement he might keep all that he got; and so we can readily understand that he tried to collect from every ship. A patrol captain of his one day got out of sight of land. Perhaps this was because he was over intent on giving chase to some skipper who had decided not to pay just yet; perhaps it was because he was caught by a fierce wind that sprang up out of the northwest. In any case, when he was far out he discovered that the northwest wind had grown altogether too strong for him and that it was impossible for him to change his course. Probably there was a mutiny then, such as Columbus went through when his sailors became alarmed at being so long out of sight of land. For it was an alarming situation for mariners who, like their predecessors time out of mind, had always feared the open sea. Annius Plocanus's shipmaster may have found himself helped a bit by using the good argument that they could not turn back even if they tried.

They made a swift voyage; for after a very short time—and it must have been short, since they certainly had not laid in provisions for going any such distance—they found themselves

two thousand miles away in the "Isle of Taprobane." That was the name for Ceylon among the Greeks and Romans. No doubt they found the great junks of China in the harbor where they put in or in some other near by. For we know that the Chinese regularly made the voyage to Ceylon with their silks at about that time. Arabic, Abyssinian or Persian ships might also have been seen there, quite overshadowed by the towering junks. For Ceylon was the meeting place of Europe and the Orient.

Annius Plocanus's captain was the first Roman navigator to reach Ceylon, however little he may have wished to do so, by the straight overseas route. When he had been on the island a little while, and had learned something of the language, he was told that the people there already knew of his country. That was not strange, for the Chinese, even, had heard of the power of the Roman emperors and knew very well that vast quantities of silk that were exported from their country eventually got to Rome.

The captain learned something, however, a little more to his present purpose of getting back home. This was, that every six months the direction of the wind changed, so that the one out of the northwest that had brought him down to Ceylon would give place to another from the southeast that would take him back again. It turned out to be exactly so; and Annius Plocanus's ship finally moored again in its harbor in the Red Sea.

This was too remarkable a thing to be neglected. It was not neglected. A certain merchant of Alexandria in Egypt, Hippalus by name, made it his business to study the winds reported by the captain of the tax patrol. He found that they did change in just such a way as had been reported. Thereupon he sent out a ship to Ceylon at the proper time of the year—that is, between April and October; it arrived safely there and returned just as safely and swiftly some time during the winter or early spring.

The "trade winds" were found; and they continued to be used to great advantage between Egypt or Arabia and Ceylon up to the time when steam power made them less important. In the days of Marco and the others they were a true boon to merchants and sailors. Their English name of "trade winds" seems to mean that they are the winds that serve trade—as they do, when trade is carried on by means of sailing vessels.

The Trade Winds

But the "trade" part of the name originally came from the word meaning "tread" or "direction." The "trade winds" meant the "winds that blow in a certain direction." Then English-speaking people began to think that, since these winds served trade, their name of "tread winds" was a bad spelling and that it ought to be changed to "trade winds." The name was changed as a consequence, so that it now represents exactly

what the wind does for commerce. But the old name represented exactly what the wind did, regardless of commerce.

Its discovery had made India much more familiar to Europeans than would have been the case if they had had to reach that land through dangerous mountain passes or by the long route close to the winding shoreline. For when they once got to Ceylon all of India was opened up to them. In fact, in Marco's day they were very well acquainted with India, at least along both the eastern and the western coastline. That being so, it is very surprising that they should have continued to hold to a number of fantastic old legends about Ceylon and the Indian mainland, while all the time they were under no illusions at all about what was to be bought and sold there, and just how all commercial transactions had to be carried on with the people.

But they had illusions galore about everything that did not touch trade. Here is a sample of what the "Book of Sir John Mandeville" offered to students of geography in the olden time. Speaking of Ceylon it says: "In that isle is a great mountain and in the mid place of the mount is a great lake in a full fair plain, and there is great plenty of water. And those who are of the country say that Adam and Eve wept upon that mountain a hundred years when they were driven out of Paradise. And that water, they say, is from their tears; for so much water they wept that it made the aforesaid lake. And in the bottom of that lake men find many precious stones and great pearls. In that lake grow many reeds and great canes. And there within be many crocodiles and serpents and great water-leeches. And the king of that country once every year gives leave to poor men to go into the lake to gather for themselves precious stones and pearls. He does this by way of alms, for the love of God who made Adam."

A little farther on the "Mandeville" gives more information about Ceylon—equally fantastic and equally false: "In that country and in others thereabouts there be wild geese that have two heads. And there be lions that are all white and

as large as oxen and many other divers beasts and fowls that be not seen amongst us. And know, too, that in that country and in other isles thereabouts the sea is so high that it seems to hang on the clouds, as though it would cover all the world. And it is great marvel that it should be so, were it not that by the will of God the air holds up the water."

The mountain is mentioned by many of the old travelers as the "Mount of Adam," and wonderful things were told about it. One was, that it was so steep that none could ascend to its summit if chains had not been attached to its sides. By means of these chains adventurous people might hoist themselves to the lake. That part of the story appears to be true, for the chains are mentioned by modern travelers in Ceylon.

Another marvel to be seen there was the "House of Adam," which, it was thought, he had built of massive stones with his own hands. This stone house might have been any one of a number of Buddhist religious buildings that were to be seen on or near the mountain.

Still another strange sight was the imprint of the foot of Adam, marked in the living rock! The size of this imprint was so great that, in the minds of the travelers, Adam was far taller than any giant of fable. But there are other stories, still older, of the great stature of Adam; perhaps our writers were recalling those stories when they imagined that the imprint in the rock in Ceylon was none too large to fit the idea they had gotten of the size of the first man.

Since Adam had lived on this mountain it was only to be expected that he would have left other relics there besides his house. Strands of his hair had been found, so it was said, as well as some of his teeth. Men knew very well that these were the teeth of Adam; for they seemed to be human teeth, and there never was any other man, they said, large enough to have had them. Also a certain bowl was found upon the mountain. It was unusual in appearance; and so the story got abroad that this was the bowl from which Adam had been accustomed to eat. Kubla Khan got wind of all this and,

since the Mongols also had in their religion the tradition of a first man, Kubla was very anxious to have the relics that had been found in Ceylon. Marco tells the story in a very pleasing way. It runs as follows:

"Now it happened that the Great Khan heard that the tomb of our first father was on that mountain, and that some hair of his, and some teeth, as well as the bowl from which he had eaten, were still kept there. And so he thought he would get them, one way or another. He sent out a great embassy to do this; it was in the year of our Lord 1284. The ambassadors, with many in their train, went along by sea and by land until they got to Ceylon. There they appeared before the king; and they argued with him so much that he let them have two of the molar teeth, which were very large. They also got some of Adam's hair, as well as the bowl from which he used to eat; and this bowl is very beautiful, being of green porphyry. At this the Great Khan's ambassadors were very much pleased, and went back to their lord. And when they came near Cambaluc, where the Great Khan was, they sent ahead to tell him that they had the things he had sent them for. . . . Why should I make a long story of it? Everybody in Cambaluc went out to meet the relics on the road; and the priests took charge of them and carried them to the Great Khan, who received them joyfully and with reverence. They found that it was written in their holy books that the bowl has this marvelous quality: that if food enough for one man is put into it then this food becomes enough for five men. And the Great Khan used to say that he had tried this out and found that it was really true. So now you know how the Great Khan got those relics. And they cost him a fortune!"

The people of Ceylon, however, did not think that these were relics of Adam. For their part, they had a legend that Buddha had lived a hermit's life on the mountain and that the bowl and other things were his. Marco had heard of that legend; in fact, he tells it at length, so that we get the impression that he thought it the true one. As for Odoric, he says

that the story of the lake being formed by the tears of Adam and Eve is "not a thing to believe for an instant!"

With all that legendary magic about it Ceylon had a renown among Europeans as a place of marvels. The whole of India was thought of in about that way. "Everything, in fact, is a marvel in this India!" is what Friar Jordanus says. He comes to the conclusion, "In truth, it is quite another world!"

Ceylon had more than its share of unusual things, even judged as a part of India. As if the story about the tears of Adam and Eve were not a remarkable enough account of the lake at the summit of the mountain, certain writers thought it necessary to find something even more extraordinary to tell. They all have tales of the precious stones that were found there; but they add to these, marvelous explanations of why this was the case. To begin with, they exaggerate the variety of precious stones by at least one item —that of the diamond, which is not a Ceylonese gem. The ruby, however, which is especially mentioned by them, is really to be found there. But why was it there? It had to be for a marvelous reason, it seems, since Ceylon was in the "other world" of India. One of the travelers—Giovanni Marignolli—gives us the reason: "On this same mountain, over towards Paradise, there is a great spring whose waters can be seen full ten miles away. And although that is where they become visible it is said that this water flows out of the Fountain of Paradise. And this is the proof they give: that sometimes there come up from the bottom many leaves of unknown sorts, lignaloes and precious stones, such as carbuncles and sapphires, as well as certain fruits that are good for healing. They say, too, that the gems are formed by the tears of Adam. But this seems to be nothing more than a legend." Giovanni Marignolli did not believe the story, then; but there were many in his time who did; and he may have thought it just barely possible, himself, since he tells it for his readers.

According to that tale the gems, and not the waters of the lake, were the tears of Adam. But there was still another story about the lake—a story that was connected with the fountain of Paradise, just as Giovanni Marignolli said he had heard. But in addition to that it concerned four great rivers. These were called the Four Rivers of Paradise, because they took their source in that region spoken of in the Bible as the Earthly Paradise, from which Adam and Eve were driven. The "Mandeville" book tells us where it was located; but as the author says distinctly that he never was in the Earthly Paradise himself we may as well leave that out.

But he is quite sure that the lake of Ceylon is connected with that region and he tells us about the four rivers that took their rise from the same source as the lake. The "Rivers of Paradise" flow over known regions of the earth, and are streams that are very familiar to geographers—who now have a different theory about their source, however. They are nothing else than the Ganges, the Nile, the Tigris and the Euphrates. The "Mandeville" makes us understand that they come to the surface of the earth at points that are about equidistant from Paradise itself. Judged by a map of our day —and admitting the picturesque legend for a moment—Paradise would then be situated somewhere in the Indian Ocean, perhaps not very far away from Ceylon. But the "Mandeville" does not advise any one to try to get into the Earthly Paradise:

"For by land no man can go, on account of the wild beasts that be in the deserts, the high mountains and great huge rocks that no man may pass, and the dark places that be there—and right many there be! And by the rivers may no man go, for the water runs so rudely and so sharply because it comes down so outrageously from the high places above that it runs in so great waves that no ship can row or sail against it. And the water roars so and makes so huge a noise and so great a tempest that no man can hear another in the ship,

though he cry out with all his might and in the highest voice. Many great lords have tried with great courage many times to pass by those rivers towards Paradise, having with them large crews. But they might not speed on their voyage. And many die out of weariness, rowing against those strong currents. And many of them become blind. And many grow deaf from the noise of the water. And some perished and were lost in the waves. So no mortal man may approach to that place without the special grace of God. And so of that place I can tell you no more. Therefore I shall hold me still, and return to what I have seen." Such stories, apparently, were what people liked to believe in the time of our travelers. We may like the stories, too, even though we can no longer believe them.

Truth and fantasy are jumbled together in a strange way in most of the accounts of Ceylon. For example, the part about the sea rising up there and resting on the air is certainly not a tale that can be explained in a reasonable manner. Again, there is a story of a mine that was worked, not by people, but by great ants the size of hounds! And we are told that the natives of the country got treasures from the mine by going there at the time when the ants were accustomed to sleep, during the heat of the day, and stealing what they could carry away. Or they might fool the ants by sending in colts with baskets tied on their backs. The ants, being stupid, and taking the colts for their own, would load the baskets with treasure. Then the colts, being hungry, would return to the people to be fed, bringing the treasure on their backs.

Those are stories that are not easy to account for. On the other hand, several of the travelers say that the stars of the northern hemisphere are less visible in Ceylon than in Europe; and that is just as we know it must have been, since the earth is round. But not all of the voyagers in the tropics who noticed that the northern firmament was somewhat shut out from view knew, or would have admitted for an instant, that

the earth is round. And so, when they say what they do about the stars, they are saying it in the same spirit in which they speak of the Rivers of Paradise. They have heard that such and such things were true; or they have observed them themselves. Then they tell about them; but they rarely do so in the reasonable way which we now expect from travelers. To-day we like to account for what we see, or to prove the truthfulness of others by some sensible explanation of what they tell us. In the fourteenth century the story—so long as it was a "good one"—satisfied almost everybody.

The tale of the birds with two heads that were to be found in Ceylon sounds fabulous enough; for we have never heard of birds with two heads and are not willing to believe that it is natural for them to have so many as that. We might perhaps admit the possibility of a freak of this sort; but we would not do so for a whole species. Yet the bird with two heads that has been mentioned does exist in Ceylon. Not that it actually has two heads, however; but there is a bird there, which at first glance, looks as though it had. This is the hornbill, which has a great bony structure over its real head that might be mistaken for a second one. In reality this is only a part of the bill, which takes on a fantastic shape in many varieties of birds.

Crocodiles and elephants are very well described in some of the old books; but there are other creatures, such as the two-headed birds, that either did not exist there at all or else are badly pictured. In short, Ceylon—like most of India and the islands of the southern seas—was first and foremost a land of marvels. Any one reading the old books will notice that there was a different attitude about this region. In northern China most of what is told us is—or was—true. In the southern lands we are more often given fables in place of truth.

But one thing in Ceylon was very evident, and there could not be much mistake about the description of it. This was, that mariners from the Far East made that their principal

place of meeting with the Abyssinians, Arabs or Persians who came from the West. We do not know just what methods were used in exchanging Chinese silk and porcelain, for example, against the wares of Europe and the Levant. But we know that the Chinese junks unloaded their cargoes in the ports of Ceylon and that the smaller ships from the West took them on there for the remainder of their voyage. Sometimes, it is true, the Chinese vessels went far up the western coast of India. Various harbors there were, where they could put in and where they had gotten the right to trade unmolested, just as they had in Ceylon.

The inhabitants of one of these coast towns took occasion, at a certain time, to turn against the Chinese and drove them out. What happened then was that the Chinese came back after a time with armed forces, laid waste the city that had betrayed their confidence, and sailed away forever to another spot where they were more loyally treated.

Sometimes the junks sailed as far as Hormuz, away beyond India to the west. They even went up the Red Sea. But the waters are shallow there, in spots, and the junks, being really deep-sea craft, never followed so unsafe a route to any extent. Their masters generally thought it wiser to stop at some port of India or, preferably, at Ceylon.

There the lighter ships of the West took on their cargoes. They were craft built in the old Arab manner, which seems not to have changed very much, in those days, from what it had been in the time of the Romans. For several of the travelers mention that these ships were not only very small as compared with the Chinese junks—or even with the European craft—but that they were fragile also. It has been said, in fact, that they were so light that they did not even dare to risk the high-seas route that was so easy to follow with the aid of the trade winds, but that they kept close to the coastline, like the vessels of ancient times, the whole voyage.

However that may have been—and we may imagine that some of the Arab and Persian ships were large enough for

the direct route—it was said that the largest of them drew but little water and that they were able to go where the junks could not venture. One Arabian geographer who lived about a century before the time of our travelers—his name was Edrisi, and he was said to be a descendant of Mohammed himself—tells us something about the Arabian ships when they got into the waters of Serendib. This was the Arabic name for Ceylon. "Opposite Serendib," he says, "on the side towards India, are some gulfs into which several rivers flow and which are called the Gulfs of Serendib. The ships sail into these gulfs and get through them in the space of one or two months, going all the time through woods and gardens. The temperature is neither hot nor cold." The waters were shallow there, with many rocks just below the surface. Consequently the Arabian ships sailed only in the daytime, when their lookouts might see these rocks in time to avoid them; and that is what accounts for the long time they put to sailing along the north coast of Ceylon. It was beyond that, in the deeper water, that they finally met the junks from China.

Weird stories were told about the perils of navigation in the Indian Ocean. Some are concerned with the unexpected shallows that might be met with, others tell of floating islands, and still others of great birds, monsters and storms that might be expected. But one of the strangest of all is of a magnetic rock that drew to it all ships that had iron in them, so that these ships could never get away from it any more, but remained held forever by the magnetic current. It happened that the Arabian ships were held together by wooden pegs instead of by iron nails or clamps. It was said that they were merely sewed together! This meant only that a certain rope of wood fiber was used to bind the timbers together. That was the traditional Arabian way of constructing ships, and no doubt it continued to be used because it was found practical for small craft; "sewed," or "stitched" boats have been seen in recent times. But the travelers insisted that rope was employed because the Arabs knew of the magnetic rock and

feared that any iron in their ships would be drawn toward this perilous place. In aftertimes it was discovered that the water in certain parts of the Indian Ocean has a bad effect upon the hulls of iron ships. For that reason copper plate is often used on those that have to go back and forth in that region. Perhaps the Arabians may have noticed that iron was not a good material to use in the ships that went out to meet the Chinese junks in Ceylon or on the west coast of India.

A Fish Charmer

CHAPTER XIII

THE WONDERS OF IND

On the Indian mainland opposite Ceylon was the province called Maabar. This name, which we use in the form 'Malabar,' is now given to the southwestern coast of India. But Marco uses it for the east coast also.

Between Maabar and Ceylon was to be seen a sight that interested the Europeans very much—as it may still do, for what they describe has hardly changed in modern times. There they found the pearl fisheries for which India is famous. Marco describes them in a short passage that is well worth giving, for it is said that the way in which the pearls have been found was, at least until quite lately, the same as the one he pictures for us.

"You must know that the sea here forms a gulf between

the Island of Ceylon and the mainland. And this whole gulf has a depth of no more than sixty or seventy feet; and in some places it is no more than twelve feet deep. The pearl fishers take their ships and their small boats and go into this gulf, where they stay from the beginning of April to the middle of May. . . . Here they anchor and take to their small boats. You are to know that the many merchants who go out divide into companies, and that each of these companies hires men for April and half of May. Of all that they get they must first pay the king his due of one-tenth.

"Then, too, they have to pay the men who charm the great fishes and prevent them from harming the divers while they are hunting for pearls under water. These fish charmers are paid one-twentieth of all the pearls that are found. They are called Brahmans. Their charm holds good for one day only; for at night they unbind the spell so that the fishes can do all the harm they like. These Brahmans know, too, how to charm beasts and birds and everything that is alive.

"When the men have got into the small boats they jump into the water and dive to the bottom, which may be anywhere from twenty to seventy feet down. And there they stay as long as they can. On the bottom they find the shells that have the pearls in them, and these they put into a net bag that is tied round their waist and come up to the surface with them. Then they dive anew, and when they can no longer hold their breath they come up again, and then down, and so on all day. The shells are like those of oysters or sea-hoods. . . . In this way they fish up great quantities of pearls; for the pearls that you find all over the world come from there. And I can tell you that the king of that country has gotten a great treasure out of his dues on those pearls.

"As soon as the middle of May is past no more pearl shells are to be found there. But it is true that a long way off from there—some three hundred miles—there are more pearls; but those are to be gotten in September and the first half of October."

Those who have visited the Indian pearl fisheries in modern times say that the Brahmans no longer act as shark charmers. But others—one of whom was a Christian, as it happened—did go out with the pearl divers to charm the sharks. The magicians were even paid by the government for doing this. No doubt the officials may have thought that these charmers were not worth their hire but paid them only because the superstitious divers thought otherwise about it and could not be induced to go into the water unprotected by charms.

Farther north a very queer custom was practiced, and it had spread down to that part of the coast that lies opposite the pearl fisheries. When a boy had reached the age of thirteen or fourteen he was turned out of his parents' house. On this occasion he would always be given a few pennies but he would be told at the same time that he must live away by himself and earn his own food and lodging. The most he could expect in his former home was that, if he would bring the food he had bought to his mother, she would cook it for him. By this independence that was forced upon them so early these little boys learned to be very shrewd merchants. One of the ventures on which they liked best to engage was that of buying pearl shells at the shore and reselling them to some merchant at a price that gave them a little profit for their time. Marco seemed to admire these lads particularly and he speaks of them in a way that makes us think that he must surely have known some of them. We can easily picture the grave Venetian minister of the Great Khan of Cathay lost in amazement at these enterprising little boys—and perhaps even being worsted in his dealings with them. For we know that Marco liked to collect mementos of his travels. He brought home sago flour from the southern isles, and no doubt he brought home oyster shells or some other trinket from the Coromandel coast, saying: "This I bought from a merchant who was but fourteen years old!"

These Coromandel boys were dark-skinned, like most East Indians, but they were not really black. This, we are told,

their parents regretted very much, for black was thought to be the best color; and the parents took great pains to rub their children with pigment so that they would gradually become coal-black. The fact was, that for some reason or other, the Indians of Coromandel had come to the conclusion that black was the symbol of good and white that of evil. Therefore the pagans represented their holy men as black, and the devils of their religion as pure white. But paganism was not the only religion of the country.

A story was told there that Saint Thomas the Apostle—the one who was called "Thomas the Doubter"—had come to the Coromandel coast and that he had suffered martyrdom in Mylapore, near Madras, where a church to him may still be seen. After Christ's departure, it used to be said, the apostles were each assigned to preach the Gospel in a different part of the world. Thomas was first told that he must preach in the lands to the west; and this has since been said to have meant America, although most people in the first century A.D. certainly did not even suspect that there was or could be such a continent. However all that may be, Thomas was not supposed to have gone to America finally, but to India. Some Christian missionary certainly did so in very early times, for travelers of a far more distant period than the fourteenth century wrote that they found Christians in India, somewhere in the south. It is an interesting fact that the Christian missionary who founded the sect of "The Christians of Saint Thomas"—as they are called—was reverenced not only by his own converts but also by the Mohammedans of the country. For they claimed, in spite of the evident fact that this saint must have been a Christian, that he was really an Islamite saint. But it is hard to tell, now, what was true and what was false in tales that originated so long ago. As for Saint Thomas the Apostle, the Christians of Syria believe that his remains lie in the city of Edessa and not in Mylapore, so that the story that he suffered martyrdom in India would be almost impossible. We do not know about that; but we do know

that the travelers who said that they found Christians in India on the Coromandel coast told the truth. They were found by still earlier travelers; and the traditions of those who are there to-day point to a very early origin for the "Christians of Saint Thomas."

The old travel records have much to tell us about the wealth of that section and about the curious habits of the pagans who formed most of the population. We are told how the whole region was divided among several kings who were brothers. Each of these kings had a number of under-lords who were his intimate companions in life and who, when he came to die, would throw themselves upon his funeral pyre, saying that since they had been friends with him while he was alive they ought to follow him into the land of the dead.

Many other curious customs are described—how the great people always sat on the ground instead of on chairs or thrones, believing that the ground is the noblest of all thrones, since we all spring from the earth and finally return to it.

We are told, too, of the distinctive Indian custom of never killing any living thing, since everything was endowed with life by a god and is therefore sacred. But Marco tells of a practice he discovered that makes us think that some of the Indians were hypocritical; for he says that they employed Mohammedans to be their butchers and that they willingly ate meat if it was prepared by others than those of their own faith.

Thousands of horses were imported into this country every year from Arabia and Persia by way of the port of Hormuz, which will be described later on. But it was said that the people of India, although they liked horses very much and were always willing to pay a very high price for them, could never keep them long. The reason for this was that they did not understand them at all and really killed them with kindness, giving them cooked cereal and meat to eat instead of the dry grain and grass and hay to which they were accustomed.

Far up this eastern coast of India, at a distance of many

hundreds of miles, there was a kingdom that reminds one of the stories of the "Arabian Nights." For in that country there were many precious jewels which were to be found at the bottom of a frightful valley whose rock walls were so steep that no man dared to climb down. Therefore certain birds were trained to get the jewels. A piece of meat would be thrown over the precipice, and in landing at the bottom of the valley it would fall hard upon some jewel or other, so that the jewel would stick tightly in it. Then the bird would be re-

The Rukh

leased and would go down to get the meat. On bringing this up again it would be caught and the jewel hunters would get their treasure from it.

In the "Arabian Nights" the bird that went down into the perilous valley in quest of the meat that had been thrown upon jewels was the Rukh. This was a tremendous bird, far

larger than any that really exist. The Persian artists used to like to represent it with elephants in its great claws, soaring out high over mountains with such prey as that. We may well wonder how men could make such a creature do their bidding. But we hardly need to think much about it, after all, since the Rukh was a fabulous bird. The travelers to India do not tell us that the bird which brought up the jewels out of the deep valley was the Rukh. This creature, they say, was to be found far off upon the island of Madagascar, where there were also bears, lions and leopards, and from the shores of which you might see great whales. Madagascar was not an island that was very well known to most of the travelers of the early fourteenth century. But they had heard of such a place and—perhaps for the very reason that it was not well known to them—they thought it a fit habitation for such a fantastic creature as the giant Rukh.

The land where the jewels were to be found was truly remarkable, if we are to believe what was written about it. This we certainly need not do; for the people of that land were said to be either green or yellow in color. There may have been some real reason for such a belief as that. But we do not know what it could have been: probably the travelers were only embroidering on the story of the jewels and wished to have people in that land who would be of as bright a hue as the stones that were brought up by the birds from the bottom of the valley. The writers of that time often did try to make facts conform to their idea of what ought to be, without looking very closely into the truth of things. This we find time and again in the practical Marco Polo, who was as much interested in finding out the real truth as any traveler could be but who often told tales that pass belief. We have to say in justification of him here that the story of the green and yellow people is Jean d'Outremeuse's and not his.

Coming down again to the southern tip of India there were to be found the city of Cail, which was on the eastern coast, and Coilum on the western. Cail is to-day a dead city and

Coilum, or Quilon, is also less important than it was when our travelers visited it. Then Coilum, which was the capital of a separate Indian kingdom, was a great port from which the brazil wood used for dyeing, pepper, ginger and indigo were exported. Strange tales were told about the region, as the following sample from Marco's book will show:

"I assure you that the heat of the sun is so great there that you can hardly bear it. In fact, if you put an egg into one of the rivers it will be boiled before you go any distance at all, just by the heat of the sun.

"The merchants from Manzi, Arabia and the Levant come here with their ships and merchandise and make a great profit both from what they bring and from what they take away.

"In this country there are many different beasts that are unlike any others. For example, there are lions that are all black, without any markings of another color. There are various sorts of parrots, too, some of them as white as snow and with red beak and feet. Others, again, are red. Some are blue, and they are the most beautiful things you can imagine. There are green ones, too. Also there are parrots that are extremely small and beautiful.

"Further, they have peacocks that are larger than ours and different. And they have cocks and hens that are of another variety.

"What more shall I say? To tell you all in one word, everything that they have there is different from ours, and finer and better. Their fruit is not like ours, neither are their beasts nor their birds. And all this difference comes from the great heat that is there."

Marco always tries to explain the things that he saw in as reasonable a way as possible. But most of the travelers gave up trying to be reasonable when they came to India. Even Friar Jordanus, who was sent out to that land as a Christian bishop, and who must have known it very well indeed, writes about it as though it were a dreamland rather than a reality. What he reports is often true enough, but he tells of what he

saw or of what he only heard from others in a certain way that makes us feel that he thought India a land of magic. Here is a sample of his description:

"Also you find very small ants there that are as white as wool and that have such hard teeth that they gnaw through timbers, even, and the joints between masonry. In short, anything that is dry they will gnaw. They destroy woolen and cotton clothes. They build a wall out of fine sand and cover themselves with it so that the sun cannot reach them. But if the wall is broken so that the light reaches them they will die at once.

The Magic Spring

"As for insects, there are wonders about them so many, great and marvelous that they cannot be told.

"Also in this India there is a kind of bird the size of a kite, with a white head and breast and red back, that will boldly snatch fish out of the hands of fishermen and other people. In fact, these birds go on just like dogs!

"There is another big bird, too, not like a kite, that flies at night only and that has a call like that of a man wailing from the deep.

"What am I to tell you? Even Satan speaks to men there, often and often, in the night season; or so I have been told.

"Everything indeed is a marvel in this India! Truly it is quite another world!"

Friar Jordanus's description does apply to birds and insects that are really to be found in southern India. What he tells us about Satan speaking to men at night is rather a part of his "marvels" than of reality. Yet Friar Jordanus's book gives us the spirit of most of what was written about India. There is one more example of it, this time from Jean d'Outremeuse, that ought to be given here. It runs in this way:

"Also near the end of that forest"—it was a great pepper grove—"is the city of Palombe"—Coilum. "And a great mountain rises above that city and it, too, is called Palombe, and gives its name to the city. And at the foot of that mountain is a fair spring and large that has the perfume of all the spices. And every hour of the day this spring changes in perfume and in taste. And whosoever drinks three times, fasting, of that water, he is cured of all sickness that he may have. And those who dwell there and drink often of that water are never ill and seem to be always young. I have drunk from that well three or four times; and it seems to me that I am much the better for it. Some men call that the Well of Youth since those who often drink thereof seem to stay young and to have no sickness. And men say that that well flows out of Paradise and that this is the reason why the water has such virtues." We may remember, here, that the mountain called Adam's Peak, in Ceylon, just opposite the mainland of Coilum, was thought to be connected with Paradise and the source of the Four Rivers—the Nile, the Ganges, the Tigris and the Euphrates. Surely, as Friar Jordanus wrote, "everything indeed is a marvel in this India!"

The travelers were much struck with the Buddhist respect

for animals. We have encountered this before, as in Thibet, for example, where the converts to Buddhism would not butcher animals in earlier times. Speaking of the kingdom of Coilum, Jean d'Outremeuse says:

"In that land men worship the ox for his simpleness and meekness and for the profit that comes from him. And they say that he is the holiest beast on earth. For it seems to them that whosoever is meek and patient is holy and of profit to others; for then, they say, he has all virtues in him. They make the ox work for six or seven years and then they eat him. And the king of that country has always an ox with him." Jean d'Outremeuse does not mention the Mohammedan butchers here; but we may suppose that the Buddhists would hardly have slaughtered the animals themselves, even if they were willing enough to eat them, as Jean d'Outremeuse gives us to understand.

Going up the western coast of India the travelers came to a port called Mount Eli. It is no longer a place of any importance, although in those days the ships of various nations used to put in there. But it was at peril of life and limb, for the ruler of that territory made it his business to confiscate the cargoes of ships that were bound elsewhere but that were forced by storm or other causes to anchor there. The king's argument seems to have been that, if the ships were really bound to another port and had had to come into his, it was Fate that had sent them to him and so he had the right to take everything they bore.

This King of Eli was perhaps a little better than some of the nobles of the coast districts of Europe at that time; for he had a philosophy about his robbing, whereas the European lords did not even bother to justify themselves. It is said that they sometimes fastened torches to the horns of cattle and drove them along the shore in stormy weather so that the pilots would think them beacons of safety, steer toward them, and run aground. Then the noble and his followers would loot the ship. The King of Eli must certainly have been

more loyal than that, at least, for the travelers found that the great junks of Manzi put into his harbor regularly. And we know from an incident that has been mentioned here that the Chinese ship captains were not men to stand disloyal treatment with patience. Marco tells us, too, that "if a ship comes that was really bound for that port they receive it with all honor and give it due protection."

There were worse pirates along the Malabar coast than those of the kingdom of Eli, if we are to believe the stories that were told of a hundred or more corsair galleys putting out from a single port to scour the seas. Some of these pirates had the useful and humorous custom of letting their victims go free after the plundering was over, only saying to them: "Go along with you and get more gain. Perhaps that will come our way, too."

We are told of many other parts of India—Guzurat, Tana, Cambaet, Semenat, Kesmacoran—places with strange names and stranger sights and sounds and perfumes. We hear of the terrible practices of the idolaters, of jewels, of monkeys that are like men and of men who live two hundred years. Part of all this is true and part is false; yet it all makes very interesting reading, and those who would care for it can find it in one or another of the books that have been mentioned.

But now we must imagine that we are at Tana, near Bombay, for our story has brought us to that point and it was from there that the travelers used to take ship for Persia. The craft on which they embarked were not the great junks of Manzi nor the ships of India, but small Arabian or Persian vessels tied together with ropes of palm fiber and picking their way very slowly through the perilous shoals and treacherous weather of the Indian Ocean, to Hormuz, at the entrance to the Persian Gulf. All the travelers say that the voyage was a dangerous one. Friar Odoric tells us that it was tedious also, for it took his ship twenty-eight days.

CHAPTER XIV

OF THE LAND OF PERSIA

In the northernmost part of the Indian Ocean, in that part which is called the Arabian Sea, and just where the Oman and Persian gulfs meet, stood the city of Hormuz. At different times this city was rebuilt, sometimes on the mainland of Persia and sometimes on an island a short distance out. Bander Abbasi is the modern name of this city; and Bander Abbasi means "The Harbor of Abbas." Abbas was the ruler there in the time when the name was changed. But that was long after the travelers whose accounts are being presented here.

"The wealth of Ormuzd and of Ind" had been exchanged in this port for centuries—whether it bore the name of Bander, "Ormuzd," Hormuz, or any of the others that were given it in different times by different races. In the age of which we are speaking there were harbors both on the mainland and on the island. The mainland town was called either Hormuz or Moghistan, while the one on the island was "New Hormuz." Yet it is of the island town that most of the travelers seem to be speaking when they refer to "Hormuz"; still another name—Turumpak—was sometimes given to it.

"A great and noble city on the sea," Marco calls it; and all the others who were there also speak of it as a great port. That is what Bander Abbasi still is. Yet, for all its importance to-day, it cannot be at all what it once was. For now there are other ways of shipping goods out of Persia or into it. But in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries it was a port of call for African and Arabic ships going out to India and Ceylon.

In long past times, when there was still a canal between the Nile and the Red Sea, the ships from Europe, too, might be seen in those waters.

In the thirteenth century Hormuz exported the products of Persia and received those of India, Ceylon, the islands of the Malay Archipelago, Manzi and Cathay. Grain, too, was brought in from various places, for only a little barley or wheat was raised in that region, and some writers say that there was no native grain at all. Dates were eaten instead of bread. One account says that the people of Hormuz never ate bread, in fact, unless they were ill, and that if they were to venture on eating any when in health they would promptly fall sick. Their dates, however, were also in demand in foreign parts, and they exported great quantities of them to India.

Horses, too, probably of the Arabian breed, were sent to India, where the people had no idea of how to raise them themselves. It must have been a strange sight to see these horses embarked on the small "stitched" ships of the Arabian type, and one wonders how they ever survived a voyage on such craft. For the Arabian ships had no decks at all and the horses had to stand on hide coverings that were laid over the cargoes. Yet we may be sure that most of the horses did survive the voyage, for great numbers of them continued to be sent out for centuries. Marco—who seems to have been a lover of horses—gives us to understand that this trade was hardly humane. It was not because the horses had to make such a frightful voyage over the sea that he seems to pity them. It was rather this: that their new masters were to be East Indians, and, as has been mentioned, he says of them that they had no idea how a horse should be fed. The custom of cooking the grain given to horses, which was general at that time in India, as well as later on, did not fit in with his ideas of the way in which horses should be treated.

Probably all sorts of races might have been seen in Hormuz, but the inhabitants seem to have been mostly negroes, if we are to judge from their being called "black." Negroes would be

the people who would find such a city as Hormuz most inhabitable, perhaps, for all the travelers describe the heat there as terrific. There were weird stories of whole invading armies being killed to a man by a "poison-wind" that sometimes swept over the region. Hardly a soul could be found in the city when the hot winds began to blow, for there was great danger of death then. Sometimes, to escape this torment of heat, every one would run into the water and stay there for hours. This last hardly seems any exaggeration. But there were also gruesome tales of people being literally consumed by the hot winds. These are harder for us to believe; yet some who have been in the region within the last century have vouched for them.

A Persian Wind-Catcher

The travelers give a true description of a remarkable kind of house that was to be seen in Hormuz. Such houses are still found in our own times in more than one city of the Levant and North Africa. It was a "wind-catcher" house—one with a sort of belfry tower built in such a way as to catch the cool winds when they blew and circulate them through the rooms below. Without these "wind catchers," it was said, life in Hormuz would have been intolerable. Those who have seen cities built in this sort of architecture say that from a little distance they are especially beautiful. For the towers are often highly ornamented and many of them rising here and there all over the city give an effect of lightness that is very pleasing. We see something similar to-day in cities where many church towers or tall buildings happen to be grouped together. Yet there is this difference: that the tall structures of our time call the eye away from the earth, toward their summits, whereas the wind towers of Persian and North African cities, being far lower, showed to the best advantage when the gardens of the houses were planted with many trees, so that the towers rose out of a setting of leaves.

But not all of the cities in those warm countries are blessed with enough water to allow of tree growing. Bagdad was famous in the old days for its beautiful trees and gardens; and its appearance from across the plains of the Tigris, with slender towers and minarets rising everywhere out of the billowy greenness of the trees was described as of more than earthly beauty. The new Hormuz that was seen by the travelers did not have the advantage of a river and canals. It had been built on a volcanic island that not only lacked suitable soil for planting but was even entirely without fresh water, either of stream, of lake or of spring. And so Hormuz, although it is described as a fine city, was without the cool gardens and parks that make life so much more beautiful and pleasant. Cisterns were built to collect what rain water there was. But that was not enough for the people, and so boats arrived regularly from the mainland with fresh sup-

plies that were contained in skins. More than one city has had to get along on such a supply of fresh water, and even at a much later period. Down to very recently, for example, the southern Italian city of Bari got all its fresh water from a distance. When railroads were built, the water was brought in that way, so that there was a much more abundant supply than in Hormuz, long ago, or in certain Levantine or North African towns of to-day.

Leaving Hormuz, the route led northward into the region called at that time the kingdom of Kerman. For two days the journey was a very pleasant one. The road lay in a plain that was sometimes called "Formosa" by the travelers, on account of its beauty; yet its real name was probably nothing but the "Hormuz" Plain, which must have been what was told to the travelers but was misunderstood by them. In this plain, Marco says, "there are beautiful streams. There too are date palms and many birds, such as francolins, popinjays, and others that are different from ours." Marco's francolin was black and white, with red feet and beak.

After that there was rising ground for twenty miles or so; and travelers found it a bad country, for it was full of bandits. Then they came out upon a higher plain on which, at a distance of five days' journey, lay the city of Camadi. This no longer exists, but it was about where the modern Karimabad is marked on our maps.

To get from the pass to Camadi was no simple matter, for the plain was infested with the strangest race of brigands who ever drew breath. At least, one would judge as much from the weird account of them that is to be found in Marco's book. It is best to repeat this here, for it is every bit as good as a ghost story. Afterward we can give what has been found out about the truth or falsehood of it.

"In this plain there are a number of strongholds and towns that have high, thick earthen walls to serve as a defense against the Caraonas, who ride everywhere over the plain. And they are called Caraonas because their mothers are

Indians, as it seems, and their fathers Tartars. And when these people decide to go on a marauding expedition over the country they perform diabolic rites and by their enchantments blot out all the light of day, so that you can hardly see anything around you. And this darkness they will keep over all for the space of seven days' journeying. They know the country very well indeed; and when they have brought on this blackness they will ride along abreast of each other. And sometimes there will be full ten thousand of them, sometimes more, sometimes less. And in this way they cover the whole plain that they wish to harry, so that no living thing abroad there can escape them—neither men, nor beasts, nor anything; and all are taken. And when they take the men they kill the ones who are old; and the young ones they lead away with them and sell into slavery."

Some people think that the name "Caraonas" was an old Italian word for brigands. But that would surely not explain why Marco adds that the marauding race had this name because they were of mixed Indian and Tartar blood. It is sometimes hard to get at just what was originally meant in books that were copied over many times before they were ever printed: and this is the case with Marco's story of his travels. But there is a Tartar word "cara," meaning "black," and "Caraonas" may be a near spelling to represent the sound of the Tartar expression for "dark people." That is probably what is meant; but whether this race was really a mixture of Indian and Tartar blood, as Marco said, we no longer know.

Surely there was a more or less distinct people that roved over the plain of Camadi and that was on the worst of terms with those of the towns and with all travelers. Because its members never associated with any one outside their tribe on friendly terms, no one could have any certain knowledge about them. For this reason any sort of fantastic legend about their manners and their diabolic enchantments might easily grow up. We know that, even now, a person who keeps much to himself is likely to gain the reputation of being a "hermit" and to

have either some untold wealth or some malevolent design on others. Sometimes we throw this dark shadow of the unknown over a whole class of people: the gypsies, in country districts in America, used to seem almost as bad to farmers and villagers as the Caraonas did to those of the plain of Camadi.

The gypsies were even thought to be able to cast magic spells, exactly as the Caraonas were believed to do when the great darkness fell over the plain of Camadi. Perhaps the Caraonas did take advantage of it when it came on; but certainly they did not cause it, either by spells or otherwise. Such a darkness is known in some regions of the earth. It is called a "dry fog," and seems to be caused by a great cloud of fine dust that is driven up out of the desert sand by a wind and that will sometimes hang for a long time in the sky and cause a semi-darkness. Those who have been in a dry fog say that it comes up rather suddenly, sometimes with a little rain accompanying it. After a while the larger particles of sand fall to the ground, leaving only the finest dust suspended in the air. Such a dry fog may last for several hours; whether any continue for seven days is another matter.

In some parts of this plain of Camadi very curious animals might be seen. Two sorts are mentioned. The first was what has since been called the "zebu." "These are very large and they are as white as snow. Their hair is short and smooth; and this is because of the hot climate. Their horns are short and thick and are not pointed. Between their shoulders they have a round hump, easily two palms high. They are the most beautiful creatures to look at in the world. And when the people wish to load them they will kneel down, as camels do; and when they are loaded they rise. And they carry their loads very well, for they are most unusually strong." The other sort of strange animal is also described by Marco: "There they have sheep the size of asses. And the tails of these sheep are so broad and so thick that they may weigh

as much as thirty pounds. They are very fine and fat, and make excellent eating."

It is said that the humped oxen that are now to be found in the region of Camadi are not so very large, although in other parts of the world they sometimes are. And those who have seen them say that it is perfectly true that they may be taught to kneel down like camels to receive their load. The description of the sheep with the great tails is mainly true; but it may fall a little short of the truth, for in modern times the shepherd of a flock of these beasts told a traveler that he had had sheep with tails weighing seventy-five pounds! After that story no one will accuse Marco of exaggeration.

From Camadi the way into the north of Persia led up into a mountain pass where, in winter, the cold was so great that it was almost impossible to bear. Then there was a pleasant plain, and in it the city of Kerman. Here quivers, bows, swords, saddles and all sorts of war gear were made, as well as wonderful embroideries.

Then there was a desert that had hardly a sign of life in it, and water at only one place, and that extended for another seven days' journey to the northward. At the end of that route was the town of Cobinan where the people made large steel mirrors. After that came another desert, without any vegetation or water at all, so that the travelers had to carry enough water and supplies to last them an eight days' journey. Then they came into the province of Tonocain, which was a pleasant and temperate country inhabited by a handsome race of people.

There they found a marvelous tree. It was one that is mentioned again and again in the tales of the medieval story tellers and that filled the imagination of the Europeans of that time. At first one would judge from Marco's account that there was really nothing so very remarkable about it. This is what he says:

The province of Tonocain "also contains a vast plain. In

this grows the Arbre Sol, the one that is called by the Christians the Arbre Sec. And I will tell you what it is like. It is high and thick, and the bark is green on one side and white on the other. It bears a rough pod like a chestnut husk; but inside this there is nothing. The wood is yellow, like boxwood, and is very strong. There are no other trees around this one, nor within a hundred miles of it, except on one side, where you find trees about ten miles away. And the people of the country tell you that it was there that the battle was fought between Alexander and King Darius."

The region where Marco saw the tree must have been that of the modern Damghan. The tree itself was doubtless a "chinar," or Oriental plane tree. These are not rare in that part of the world, and the description answers very well, except that Marco does not give a sufficient idea of the vast size of some of the chinar trees. For modern writers who have seen them say that they are sometimes many yards in circumference; one monstrous specimen apparently measured more than a hundred and fifty feet around the base of the trunk! The wood is very hard, with a beautiful grain, and is dark in color, like walnut, when it has been rubbed with oil and polished.

As for the battle that was fought near the tree by Alexander and Darius, that is only a legend; but it is one that was current among the natives of the country and that doubtless was recounted to all who chose to hear. Yet it is easy to see how it grew up; for in fact it was not far from there that Darius was murdered. It was quite natural to think of his death as occurring in battle, since a battle had been fought in which he was conquered by Alexander; but that was at Arbela, many hundreds of miles westward.

Now there was another famous tree far to the west in the Holy Land, about which the "Mandeville" has something to say. At first it seems to have no connection with "the one that is called by the Christians the Arbre Sec." Yet it was probably the very tree itself. Before explaining this it will be best

to give what the "Mandeville" has about the tree that was in the Holy Land:

"And a little way from Mount Hebron is Mount Mamre from which the valley takes its name. And there stands an oak tree that the Saracens call Dirpe. It is as old as the time of Abraham, and it has also the name of the Dry Tree. And they even say that it has been there since the beginning of the world and that it was green and bore leaves up to the time when Our Lord died on the Cross. And then it dried up, and so did all the trees that were then in the world—or else they failed in their hearts and became hollow within, and of these there are many yet standing in divers places of the world. And some say by their prophecies that a lord, a Prince of the west side of the world, shall win the Land of Promise—that is, the Holy Land—with the help of Christian men. And he shall have a mass sung under that Dry Tree. And then the tree shall wax green and bear both fruit and leaves."

It is still thought by some people that Abraham was buried by the Oak of Mamre. Then there are various other stories of this dry tree or of others, such as that they were the staff of Adam, or of some patriarch. But all the stories have an element of the marvelous about them.

It seems to be a widespread custom in the countries of the Near East to attribute supernatural powers to giant trees, and especially to those that are dead. Many travelers have told of such trees, and particularly in Persia, being decked out with countless little streamers of fabric on which certain words are written. These streamers are attached to the trunk or boughs by way of making a prayer to the tree that it will favor some wish.

It is quite plain that a little of the magic of the prehistoric fetish worshipers still clings to giant dead trees in that part of the world. But the Oaks of Dodona rendered oracles, it was said, in ancient Greece; and there was a magic tree in the Alban Mountains before Rome was built. In the northern countries of Europe, too, trees were revered, as, for example

among those who followed the religion of the Druids. Memories of these old beliefs are still current in the countries west and north of the Mediterranean.

And so it is small wonder that King Alexander, who remained one of the great magical heroes of the Middle Ages, should encounter a magical tree. And he did, according to the story-tellers of that time and of even earlier centuries.

The Trees of the Sun and the Moon

They recounted that he was told of certain trees that were called the Trees of the Sun and the Moon, and that these trees would tell him what his fortunes were to be. The Tree of the Sun did this: it told him that he would be King of the World, indeed, but that he would never see his native land of Macedonia again. And in fact, says the legend, Alexander died

soon after this. The Trees of the Sun and the Moon were generally thought to be in some distant eastern country; and the part of Persia in which Marco found himself, combined with the assassination of Darius there, would have furnished just the right surroundings for them.

Marco's name "Arbre Sol" means "Tree of the Sun," while "Arbre Sec" means "Dry Tree." Why did he make them one and the same? Some writers say that it was simply because he had found a chinar tree that was particularly reverenced by the people of the region and that he was inclined to attribute to it all that he had heard either of the Tree of the Sun or of the Dry Tree. But he was not the first of his times to do the same thing, for in European medieval literature the two legends are often combined into one. But it seems likely that he called it the Tree of the Sun because of the story of Alexander and of the death of Darius near by; and when he discovered that the tree bore no good fruit, but only rough husks, the name "Dry Tree" came into his mind and he gave it this name also, very appropriately, it is true, but without much regard to the claims of the old Oak of Mamre. The point is one that is of particular interest to those who enjoy reading the literature of the Middle Ages—that is, of the times in which our travelers lived.

There is one further thing to be said about it. "Arbre Sol" has sometimes been thought to mean "Arbre Seul," or "Lone Tree." And it will be remembered that Marco says that there are no other trees near it. The legend of a lone tree with miraculous powers was also current then and later. Shakespeare's verse, "On the sole Arabian tree," in *The Phœnix and the Turtle* brings that home to us. It also reminds us that the magical bird the Phœnix was supposed to live in the branches of this tree. But it is hard to trace any legend of a Lone Tree, in the older literature, except the one that is easily identified with the Tree of the Sun. And so, although it is not possible to be sure in such matters, we may take it as likely enough that whatever legend of a "Sole Tree" there

was grew out of a confusion between the words "Sol" and "seul" in Old French.

To the west of the Tree lay the land of Melehet. The name does not matter as much as the position: this land of Melehet—it was called Mellestoire sometimes—lay near the Caspian Sea. Marco has it at a point not very far from the south end of that water, while some travelers thought that they found it farther to the north and west. Probably Marco is nearer right than the others, for history tells of a certain castle called Alamut, or Eagle's Nest, that was near the city of Kaswin, south of the Caspian, and famed as the stronghold of the strange prince who ruled over the land of Melehet, or Mellestoire.

The crusaders called this prince "The Old Man of the Mountain." They hardly understood who he was or what he did. But they knew that they had to be on their guard against him, for there were many tales of young men among the armies of the crusaders who had been lost from sight forever by the wiles of this same Old Man of the Mountain or of those who served him. And the Saracens, the sworn enemies of the invading crusaders, feared the Old Man quite as much as the Christians did. For although this prince and his followers believed in the religion of Islam in a general way, still they were heretics in the minds of those who opposed the crusaders, and were said to pin their faith, not on Mohammed, but on an uncle of his who helped to found the religion of Islam. And that, of course, was heresy. Yet, after all, if the followers of the Old Man of the Mountain reverenced anybody in particular it seems to have been neither Mohammed nor his uncle, but the Old Man himself, who inspired such terror in the Caspian region of Persia and in the very battle fields of the Holy Land.

Before telling what has been discovered about this terrible personage, whose followers were called by the evil names of "hashish-eaters" and "assassins," it will be best to give one of the descriptions of him and of his people that were written

in the olden times. Marco has several chapters about the Old Man, and they are very interesting; but they are too long to repeat in this place, and so the account of Odoric, which gives a good idea of what men thought of the Old Man in those days, can serve our purpose. Here is what Odoric says:

"When I came out of the Land of Prester John I came to a mountain with great riches that is called Mellestoire. They used to call the lord of that country The Old Man of the Mountain. This Old Man had enclosed a mountain round about with a fine wall."

Some accounts say that his domain was a fertile valley, enclosed by walls at each end. But that does not matter:

"At the foot of this mountain were the finest and most beautiful springs in the world. And there he had put the fairest maidens he could find, as also everything that is pleasant. And this place they call Paradise.

"When he found any fine, strong man he put him in this Paradise among all these delightful things and took him about among them. And so this young man would think that he was really in Paradise. For by clever ways he made wine run there; and he gave these young men all the pleasure that body of man could want.

"When this Old Man wanted to have any one killed he would give some of these young men a beverage to drink. And this would throw them into a deep sleep. And while they were asleep he would have them carried out of Paradise. And when they were awake he would call them before him and tell them that they would never get back into Paradise unless they put to death such and such a man or great lord. But if they would kill him he would put them back into Paradise and would have them live there, where they would have incomparably more delight than in the first. These young men, loyal and strong as they have been described, believed it was true that it was the Paradise of Heaven where they would have everlasting life. And so they would offer themselves to the Old Man, to do what he would. And they would say that

at his command they would kill not only the one he said, but a thousand others, if he would. And then they would go and put themselves under peril of death to kill this person he had said.

"By such means the Old Man took vengeance on his enemies, so that every one feared him. All the neighboring lords became tributary to him. And if they owed him any tribute he had them killed in this way.

"The Tartars got wind of this. And then they came against him in great numbers, conquered him, put him to a cruel death, and destroyed his castle."

This last really happened, and the descendants of the Old Man of the Mountain had to give up their paradise and go to live in strange parts of the earth. No doubt some are alive to-day. Less than a century ago, at any rate, one of them was keeping great estate in exile at Bombay in India. He seems not to have been a cruel man in the least, although he was an accomplished general who did great service for the British government. In his leisure—which was most of the time—he gave his attention to a stable of swift Arabian horses that he had imported into India—although probably not in the stitched Arabian boats that have been described. His name was Aga Khan; when he was eighty-one years of age he died, quite peacefully, and, so far as has been reported, without any heinous accusations at all against his character. This descendant of the Old Man passed away as late as 1881.

It is probable that when Marco, Odoric and the others tell us the frightful story of the wiles of the Old Man of the Mountain who lived in Melehet—or Mellestoire—they are only telling one of the exaggerated stories that grow up about the enemies of a party or a nation that is at war with another. Marco and Odoric got their legend from the enemies of the Old Man. And these enemies may as well have been Mohammedans or Tartars as Christians. For the Old Man kept up a war upon all of them to the end of his days. No traveler in that country, in Marco's time, could have heard any good about him. For he was dead, his followers and descendants

had gone away, and the men who were there to tell his story could only be his former enemies.

What had happened was merely this: that there had lived in that land a Mohammedan who did not fully accept the beliefs of most of the people of Islam. This man was therefore a heretic in the eyes of others who accepted the religion of Mohammed more entirely. And so they were willing to tell all sorts of tales about him.

Odoric says that the Old Man gave his followers a beverage that threw them into a deep sleep. For the name of the followers of the Old Man came from the word "hashish"; and hashish is a drug that is well known as a giver of dreams. The followers of the Old Man were therefore called by a name that sounded like "hashishin." And this, in its turn, is our word "assassin." "Assassin," in fact, was the name given by the Christians to the people who were under the rule of the Old Man who lived near the Caspian. Probably they did more than simply fight in loyal battle; they seem to have had devious ways of doing away with the invaders from the West, as well as with the Islamites who were equally their enemies. We may be sure of this: that a terrible story was told of a certain people of that region. This story had magical elements in it and it was intended to show that the Old Man of the Mountain was a most sinister character, quite beyond the pale of human sympathy.

South of the mountain of Mellestoire was the city of Saba. The story ran that it was from there that the Three Kings —the Magi of the East—set out for Bethlehem to make their gifts to the infant Jesus. He gave them a present, too, according to the story. This present was a stone that kindled a fire that was ever after kept burning in the land of Persia. It was a story that had to be told. For did not the Persians, or some of them, worship fire? No matter that the fire religion was far more ancient than Christianity; still the medieval Christians had to make it their own, or inspired by their own. The story was a good one to tell, for it was a matter of common

report in Europe that the "Magi," as the Three Kings were called, were really the magicians of the fire. And since these Magi had adored Christ it was well to make them out to be His followers if that could be arranged in any way. Otherwise they would have been no better than the "magicians" all fire worshipers were supposed to be, and their long following of the Star to the manger in Bethlehem would have had no special meaning for Christians. The story is one of many that were invented or accepted in the Middle Ages to suit the purposes of Christians who had more regard for the spread of their faith than for historical truth.

Sometimes travelers did not go directly north from Hormuz, but took an easterly route that led in the direction of Bastra, on the Persian Gulf, and on to Mosul in the Irak. Then they came upon a great marvel. This was the half-deserted city of Conan, or Cornaa. Its site is that of the Persian city Istakhr, in the province of Farsistan. In former times, long before the thirteenth century, this city was none other than Persepolis, that almost legendary eastern capital that was destroyed by Alexander the Great and, it is said, rebuilt by him. When Odoric passed that way he found it a place well stocked with provisions, so that we may imagine that the population was not small. Yet it was nothing in comparison to the number that must have lived in the ancient city of Persepolis. Odoric saw the ruins of the walls and tells us that they were fifty miles round about! Even the "Mandeville" does not go so far in its description, for it says that the walls were only half that long. But, to all who have seen this spot in modern times, the tremendous ruins that are there have told of one of the greatest cities of all time. Yet it is indeed almost legendary; for to-day it slumbers so deeply in the hot plains of Persia, away beyond the deserts of the Irak, that it seems as though it can never come to life again. We do not hear of it any more, and even the travelers of the fourteenth century only wrote a few wondering phrases about it and passed by.

A Fortress near the Iron Gate

CHAPTER XV

OF THE LANDS BEYOND PERSIA

Far to the west of Persepolis, and northward from Bastra, lay "Baudas." It was a great city on the Tigris River—one that has already been mentioned for its luxuriant gardens and trees and the beautiful appearance of its towers and minarets rising out of the plain. It was Bagdad.

This was a rich manufacturing city, and its fabrics, in particular, were famous the world over, from Europe to China. One of the names given to the town was Baldac, and this was used for the rich brocades of silk and gold thread that "baldachins" were made of—the canopies that surmounted thrones and other seats of state. A projecting shelf is now given the same name in architecture, even when there is no brocade at all to be seen. Bagdad was in the neighborhood of the ancient city of Babylon, and there, too, the making of fabrics had been a chief industry, time out of mind; so the medieval manufac-

tures that made Bagdad famed among merchants were an old tradition. There was a quarter of the city called the Attabieh; that also gave its name to a fabric of watered silk that is mentioned in the English dictionaries under the name of "tabby." In just such a way the city of Arras gave its name to another fabric, and Laon, under the spelling of "lawn," to still another.

Long before the times of our travelers Bagdad had been far more than a great trading and manufacturing center. Earlier accounts speak of it as a true jewel among cities, with many-colored towers and cupolas rising like a dream out of a forest of greenery. It "used to be the capital of the Calif of all the Saracens in the world," says Marco, "just as Rome is the seat of the Pope of all the Christians." Its renown had spread over the Levant, North Africa and Spain, and even eastward into India; for it was really the greatest city of all Islam.

There had been a city there from time immemorial. In one part of it old Babylonian walls have been found which point to a very ancient date. In 762 A.D., or more than five centuries before our travelers passed that way, a certain Mohammedan ruler, the Calif Mansur, made a new and stately city there within the older one. This was the "Round City" of Bagdad that has already been mentioned as having possibly suggested to Kubla Khan the planned city of Taidu in Cambaluc. It will be remembered that Kubla's brother Hulagu had taken Bagdad and its Round City from the later representatives of the Calif Mansur and that he may have sent word to Kubla of the way in which the Inner or Royal city of Bagdad was laid out.

It was not what Kubla finally decided on for the plan of Taidu. For the inner city of Bagdad was a perfect circle, carved out, as it seems, from a jumble of rambling streets and marshy lands that lay in the center of the ancient Bagdad. Mansur's Round City was about a mile in diameter. It was strongly walled and was watered by the many canals that had been dug from the bed of the Tigris River. In this round

quarter palaces and government offices and buildings for court attendants and troops were built. And all these were constructed on circles in regular fashion. In addition to them there was also a mosque; but that was truly necessary as a part of the establishment of a ruler who, like the Calif Mansur, was a church official as well as a governor. There were parks and gardens within the Round City also, as there were in all other parts of Bagdad.

North of Bagdad was the city of Mosul, with its commerce of "spicery, pearls, and fabrics of silk and gold." The travelers found many Christians there; but unfortunately they did not get much pleasure out of that, for the Mosul Christians belonged to the sect of the Nestorians, and were considered as little better than pagans by the men who acknowledged the Pope of Rome. In those days the majority of the Christians of the Orient were Nestorians—even as far out as Cathay and Manzi where, however, the Pope was establishing missions.

A certain fabric that was made in Mosul has since become very well known in Europe and America. We now call this muslin; in the fourteenth century the slightly different form of "Mosolin" was used. But "Mosolin" was then applied to several fabrics that we should no longer recognize as muslin; for Marco refers to "all the cloths of gold and silk that are called 'Mosolins.'" It seems that all the fabrics that were made there then were given this general name, whereas now we apply it only to a certain cotton weave. No doubt that very weave was produced in Mosul in the olden days, for the travelers found that there were great cotton fields in the vicinity of the city and that, in fact, cotton thread was woven up into "buckram and other cloth."

The region around this city was less pleasant than it might have been, for it was inhabited in part by a ferocious race that, even though it was hardly as sinister as the night riders of the plain of Camadi, was still a terror to every peaceful traveler. Marco says: "There is still another race who

live in the mountains there. They are called Kurds. Some of them are Christians and some Saracens. But they are an evil race whose delight it is to plunder merchants." Marco seems to be worse than unfavorable to the Kurds and, if we wish to read between the lines of his laconic description of them, we may fairly imagine that his party had had a brush or so with them. Marco almost never recounts any of his adventures—and it is a loss, for he must have had many, either interesting or blood-curdling. But any one who has read his book through many times can hardly mistake the passage. Certainly Marco had encountered Kurdish marauders. Just as certainly he had won his way through them in some manner or other, since he lived to tell the tale of his travels. But something still rankled within him, for those few lines have an angry ring in them that is unusual with Marco, who was generally such a sedate young merchant adventurer and official of the Great Khan. We know from more recent accounts of the Kurds that they are by no means all brigands, for many of them are engaged in raising grain, tobacco, cotton or fruit. At the same time, their very name has a warning in it: for it came either from the Persian word for "strong" or "brave," or from the Turkish word meaning "a wolf." Whichever etymology is the right one, the Kurds of long ago no doubt knew how to make themselves feared by their neighbors; and those among them who have become farmers are probably not representative of the race as it was in the thirteenth century.

In any case, if we are to believe a story that is told by Marco, the Kurds were once upon a time seriously inconvenienced. The marauders among them, at least, lived up in the mountains. And Marco tells us nothing less than this: that once upon a time one of these mountains was moved! If it was, and if there were Kurds living upon it, it is safe to say that they had the experience of their lives and that they should by all rights have given up their evil ways—which we have reason to believe they did not, by any means.

Marco's tale is a pure miracle story. Some readers will not

believe in its truth, while perhaps others may. For it is argued sometimes about such tales that, although they run contrary to nature, still the events they recount are not at all supposed to be natural events but rather the results of the intervention of a supernatural power. And if you believe in a supernatural power then you can believe the miracle.

Whatever we may think of the argument, and whether or not we believe in miracles, for whatever reason, still it is evident that Marco did believe in them. And since his story is very well told indeed it may be given in part, as follows, in the pleasant translation of Sir Henry Yule:

"I will tell you then this great marvel that occurred between Baudas and Mausul. . . . There was a Calif at Baudas who bore a great hatred to Christians and was taken up day and night with the thought how he might either bring those that were in his kingdom over to his own faith, or might procure them all to be slain. And he used daily to take counsel about this with the devotees and priests of his faith, for they all bore the Christians like malice. . . .

"Now it happened that the Calif, with those shrewd priests of his, got hold of that passage in our Gospel which says, that if a Christian had faith as a grain of mustard seed, and should bid a mountain be removed, it would be removed. And such indeed is the truth. But when they had got hold of this text they were delighted, for it seemed to them the very thing whereby either to force all the Christians to change their faith, or to bring destruction upon them all. The Calif therefore called together all the Christians in his territories, who were extremely numerous. And when they had come before him, he showed them the Gospel, and made them read the text which I have mentioned. And when they had read it he asked them if that was the truth? The Christians answered that it assuredly was so. 'Well,' said the Calif, 'since you say that it is the truth, I will give you a choice. Among such a number of you there must surely be this small amount of faith; so you must either move that mountain there'—and he pointed to a mountain in

the neighbourhood—'or you shall die an ill death; unless you choose to eschew death by all becoming Saracens and adopting our Holy Law. To this end I give you a respite of ten days; if the thing be not done by that time, ye shall die or become Saracens.' And when he had said this he dismissed them, to consider what was to be done in this strait wherein they were.

"The Christians on hearing what the Calif had said were in great dismay, but they lifted all their hopes to God, their Creator, that He would help them in this their strait. All the wisest of the Christians took counsel together, and among them were a number of bishops and priests, but they had no resource except to turn to Him from whom all good things do come, beseeching Him to protect them from the cruel hands of the Calif.

"So they were all gathered together in prayer, both men and women, for eight days and eight nights. And whilst they were thus engaged in prayer it was revealed in a vision by a Holy Angel of Heaven to a certain Bishop who was a very good Christian, that he should desire a certain Christian cobbler, who had but one eye, to pray to God; and that God in His goodness would grant such prayer because of the cobbler's holy life. . . .

"And when the appointed day was come, all the Christians got up early, men and women, small and great, more than one hundred thousand persons, and went to church, and heard the Holy Mass. And after Mass had been sung, they all went forth together in a great procession to the plain in front of the mountain, carrying the precious cross before them, loudly singing and greatly weeping as they went. And when they arrived at the spot, there they found the Calif with all his Saracen host armed to slay them if they would not change their faith; for the Saracens believed not in the least that God would grant such favour to the Christians. These latter stood indeed in great fear and doubt, but nevertheless they rested their hope on their God Jesus Christ.

"So the cobbler received the Bishop's benison, and then threw himself on his knees before the Holy Cross, and stretched out his hands towards Heaven, and made this prayer: 'Blessed Lord God Almighty, I pray Thee by Thy goodness that Thou wilt grant this grace unto Thy people, insomuch that they perish not, nor Thy faith be cast down, nor abased nor flouted. Not that I am in the least worthy to prefer such request unto Thee; but for Thy great power and mercy I beseech Thee to hear this prayer from me Thy servant full of sin.'

"And when he had ended this his prayer to God the Sovereign Father and Giver of all grace, and whilst the Calif and all the Saracens, and other people there, were looking on, the mountain rose out of its place and moved to the spot which the Calif had pointed out! And when the Calif and all his Saracens beheld, they stood amazed at the wonderful miracle that God had wrought for the Christians, insomuch that a great number of the Saracens became Christians. And even the Calif caused himself to be baptised in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen, and became a Christian, but in secret. Howbeit, when he died they found a little cross hung round his neck; and therefore the Saracens would not bury him with the other Califs, but put him in a place apart. The Christians exulted greatly at this most holy miracle, and returned to their homes full of joy, giving thanks to their Creator for that which He had done."

Marco forgets to tell us whether the one-eyed cobbler was a Nestorian Christian or not. Apparently he never thought of it; for if he had, and if the cobbler had turned out to be a Nestorian, Marco could have had but small pleasure in telling the story, whereas he told it with evident delight. And we may read it with pleasure, too, whether we believe it or not. For it is told in the simple way that was common to so many of the writers of past times and that shows us, as it were for the asking, how they really thought about things. Modern writers are not always—not even often—so straightforward.

Perhaps that is because they hardly know what they do believe, and what not.

Still farther to the north, beyond the plains and the cotton fields of Merdin and Mus, lay the city of Tauris. When the travelers arrived there they had left the Irak behind them and were in the Caspian region that was generally called Armenia the Greater—although Tauris—or Tabriz, as we call it—was sometimes said to lie within the boundaries of Persia. It was not a matter of great consequence, however, at that time, since the Tartars, under the central rule of Kubla Khan in Taidu, governed almost all of what lies between the Persian Gulf, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean and the Caspian.

Tauris—or rather, Tabriz—was a great center of trade in those days. There were manufactures of fabrics there, yet goods were sent in also from Bagdad and Mosul. And whatever found its way into the port of Hormuz came up, eventually, by the slow caravans, to be offered for sale in Tabriz. When Marco was there he found Genoese merchants busily carrying on their trade of exporting these things to Europe and, very certainly, bringing in their own wares from Europe. Had Marco only known it—perhaps he did, but he does not say so—there was a Venetian compatriot of his also in Tabriz. At least there had been, in the year 1264, for the will of the Venetian Peter Vioni, which was dated then, was made in Tabriz. Perhaps Peter Vioni had died; yet there must have been other Venetians ready to take the enviable place of a merchant who had been able to establish himself in so great a center of trade, particularly—as Marco says—since it was a place "where merchants make large profits."

Odoric speaks of Tabriz with the greatest admiration. "This city," he says, "is the best in the world, I tell you, for trade. For there is no sort of produce that you do not find there in the greatest abundance. And it is such a marvel, what you do see there, that if you have not seen it you can scarcely believe it. This city is very well situated, for it trades with the whole world; and I mean by that, that it is located in such

a position that it can receive merchandise from everywhere and that it is a good place in which to trade for everything. And the Christians who live here say that this city brings in more revenue to its ruler"—this was a descendant of Hulagu, Kubla's brother—"than does all the realm of France to its king."

Ibn Batuta also has a colorful little picture of Tabriz. "I went through the jewelers' bazaar," he says, "and I was dazzled by all the precious stones I saw. There were handsome slaves wearing fine clothes girdled with silk who were offering gems for sale to the Tartar ladies, who bought many of them."

Tabriz was not merely a city of commerce, for a historian of the time tells us that there were to be seen there "philosophers, astronomers, scholars and historians of all religions and sects. There were people from Cathay, from Manzi, from India, from Kashmir, from Thibet, people of the Uighur and other Turkish nations, Arabs and Europeans."

Yet, says Marco, "the people of the place are themselves poor creatures." They were not of any one race, any more than those who came there to meet for trading or other purposes—such as talking about the problems of philosophy, astronomy or history, as we may gather from what the historian wrote long ago. It is probable that Tabriz, being a place where there was a great abundance of all things necessary to life and enjoyment, supported a large population of idlers who lived on the crumbs left by those who were more industrious and who, as such idlers always manage to do, earned the contempt of visitors to the city. Indeed, the native population of Tabriz had the reputation of being vain and treacherous.

It was a pity, for the city itself, in addition to being a rich center of trade, was, like Bagdad, a beautiful spot. The gardens which were to be seen everywhere had earned for it a great reputation in the lands south of the Caspian as an idyllic place in which to live. Perhaps that may account for what the historian, Rashiduddin, tells us of the multitude of

scholars from many lands who congregated in Tabriz. No doubt they liked to live there.

Near Tabriz, it was said, there was a mountain of salt, and the people of the town had the custom of going out to it to dig up as much as they liked, and without any payment, for their own use. To most Europeans that seemed quite a marvel, too, because the governments of their countries generally controlled the supply of salt and permitted it to be sold only at many times its value. But free salt did not seem to affect the people of Tabriz in any other way, perhaps, than to make them proud and shiftless—for they are mentioned as being particularly bad characters.

To the west of Tauris was another mountain—one far more famed than the mountain of salt, for it is celebrated by the Bible account of Noah's Ark. This, of course, was Mount Ararat. All who saw it were much impressed by its great height, and one writer of the time says that this was no less than seven miles; as a matter of fact it is something less than half that. It was said that on clear days you might sometimes see a dark object on the very summit of the mountain, and that if you were to look sharply enough you would soon discover that this object was nothing else in the world than the Ark itself—unharmed and entire, just as it was on that day when the waters subsided!

Odoric was told of the marvel and he says: "Very gladly would I have gone up into this mountain if those who were with me had been willing to wait for my return, and that notwithstanding that the people of this country told us that no one can ever climb it. For it seems, as they say, that this is not pleasing to Almighty God."

Yet in a church that was to be visited near the foot of the mountain there was a plank from the Ark, or so the travelers were told. How did it get there? It got there because there had been one single but very famous exception to the rule: one man had gotten to the top of Ararat. If he did he was the first to succeed before the year 1829, so far as any one knows.

In that year it was scaled, and it has been a number of times since then. The "Mandeville" tells of the exploit of the man who was supposed to have climbed Ararat in the distant past, as follows:

"Upon that mountain to go up this monk had a great desire"—like the other monk, Odoric. "And so upon a day he went up. And when he was a third of the way up the mountain he was so weary that he might go no further; and so he rested him and fell asleep. And when he awoke he found himself lying at the foot of the mountain. And then he prayed devoutly to God that He would vouchsafe to suffer him to go up. And an angel came to him and said that he should go up. And so he did; and since that time never any one." Of course, the "Mandeville" means to show that if this monk did succeed in scaling the mountain it was not because he was a good climber; for he had already tried and failed. But rather it was because he had thought to pray God that he might be allowed to do it. The tale makes the meaning still clearer in this way:

"For a man may not go up the mountain on account of the great quantity of snow that is always on that mountain, summer or winter, so that no man can go up there. Nor did ever any man since the time of Noah except a monk that, by the grace of God, brought down one of the planks that is in the church at the foot of the mountain."

Mount Ararat was not the only wonder in this land. Near by was a country that merited the same name that was given to the polar regions, the "Land of Darkness." But while we can understand why the far North was called by that name, the Land of Darkness of the Caspian region is no longer encountered any more by travelers, nor is it marked on modern maps. That is as much as to say that it was pure myth, as any one will agree, on reading the weird description that is given in the "Mandeville," which runs in this way:

"In that Kingdom of Abchaz is a great marvel. For a province of the country that is full three days' journey around

and which men call Hauyson is all covered with darkness without any brightness or light, so that no man can see or hear; nor does any man dare enter into it. And natheless they of the country say that sometimes men hear voices of folk, and horses neighing, and cocks crowing. And men know well that men dwell there, but they know not what men. And they say that the darkness befell by a miracle of God.

"For an accursed Emperor of Persia named Saures pursued all Christian men to destroy them and to compel them to make sacrifice to his idols. And he rode with as great a host as ever he might to confound the Christian men. And then there dwelt in that country many good Christian men; and they left their goods and would have fled into Greece. And when they were in a plain called Megon this accursed emperor met them with his host for to slay them and hew them to pieces. And anon the Christian men knelt to the ground and made their prayers to God to succor them. And anon a great thick cloud came and covered the emperor and all his host. And so there they stay on, nor may they go out on any side. And so shall they evermore abide in that darkness till the Day of Doom, by the miracle of God.

"And then the Christian men went where they liked, at their own pleasure and without the let or hindrance of any, with their enemies enclosed and confounded by darkness, and no blow struck."

Perhaps we may be inclined to blame the writer of the "Mandeville" for being overcredulous. But that was a way of the time: even Marco, who was too experienced a traveler to believe all that he heard, says that the Ark is really to be found on the top of Mount Ararat. But he does not tell of the Land of Darkness near the Caspian. One wonders why, for it was he who believed the story of the One-Eyed Cobbler and the Mountain.

To the east of Mount Ararat, and on the shore of the Caspian Sea near the city of Baku, "there is a spring from which

much oil flows." Those are Marco's words, and he goes on: "There is so much that a hundred ships might be loaded with it at once. This oil is not good with food. But it is good to burn; and they also rub it on camels that have the mange. People from very far away come to get it, for in all the countries round about there is no oil." That is another marvel—or it must have seemed one to the Europeans of the time. And yet it is no other marvel than the Baku oil fields that supply so much of the petroleum that is used to-day. Marco's description of its uses at that time is quite exact, as far as it goes. But it may very well be that the crude oil was also used in building houses, much in the same way that we have of using mortar between stones or bricks, in setting up a wall. In any event archæologists have discovered that in very ancient times the people of Babylon used a form of petroleum like tar for building.

About as far to the north of Baku as Tabriz is to the south of it there is a valley in the Caucasus Mountains known to-day as the Pass of Derbend. There was a strange legend about this place that has come down to us in the books of the Middle Ages. Marco knew it very well, and believed it, as the following lines of his will show. But they are particularly interesting because they give the impression that Marco was trying to set down only that part of the legend that should be taken as strictly true.

"This is the country," he says, "beyond which Alexander could not pass when he wished to go into the North, since the defile was so narrow and dangerous, with the sea on one side and high mountains impassable to cavalry on the other. The pass leads along in this way for four leagues, and a handful of people might hold it against the whole world. Alexander had a strong tower built there to keep the people from the North from coming down to attack him. And this came to be called the Iron Gate. This is the place that the Book of Alexander tells of where it says how he shut up the Tartars

between two mountains. But they were not really Tartars—for there were no Tartars in those days; but they were a race of people called the Comanians, and many others with them."

This reads about as a modern history does when it is explaining something that has never been rightly understood. Marco is trying to tell the facts, and nothing besides; and what he says about Alexander putting a fortress at the mouth of the defile sounds like quite the reasonable thing for a skilled general to do. As a matter of fact, there is a whole chain of such fortifications in the region of Derbend, although they are now in ruins.

Most of the old writers have a much more remarkable tale to tell. In the first place, "Iron Gate" was for them no mere name for a castle or tower of stone: by that name they really meant to call attention to an iron or bronze gate that was supposed to have been placed at the entrance to the Pass of Derbend by King Alexander the Great. They told a strange story about how Alexander drove certain of his evil enemies —not between the sea and a mountain, but between two mountains. Having gotten them herded into this spot he made the mountains close in upon them, either by a prayer or by magic spells, and then set up the Iron Gate to keep them imprisoned there forever.

The "Mandeville" gives a better account of the geography of the region, for it says that the Caspian is open to the prisoners, but that they dare not go out upon it, not having any idea where such a voyage would lead them. It also tells a story that was more widely believed in Europe in the olden time than Marco's. For it makes the enemies of Alexander the "Tribes of Gog and Magog," and not the Tartars and their allies. Thus we find that the people of the Middle Ages could hardly invent enough prisons for those ferocious mythical warriors of Gog and Magog, since they had them shut up, not only on the shores of the Caspian Sea but also in the far-off region that lies beyond Cambaluc of Cathay.

But it seems that Alexander's Iron Gate was hardly suffi-

Journeys of John of Plano Carpini and William of Rubruquis, including The Account of Friar Odoric the Bohemian with an Irish Companion
THE
HERE LIVE DOG-FACED PEOPLE
Isthmus of Perecop
DON
GAZARIA
RIVER TANAIS OR
SEA OF TANAIS
GREATER SEA
HERE DWELL THE PAROCH
WHO LIVE ON SMELL.
HERE ARE ONLY TOMBS
AND HEAPS OF BONE.
TREBIZOND
ERZERUM
GREATER ARMENIA
SEA OF BAKU
TAURIS
ARARAT.
HERE IS THE
DE
CASSAN
HERE LIVED THE THREE MAGI
HERE BLOW
DANGER
HERE IS THE GREAT SEA OF SAND
ORMES
(HORMUZ)
HERE IS GREAT HEAT
AFRICA
Arabia
HERE ARE BLACK LIO
AND GREAT RATS
AND BATS.
HERE PEPPER GROWS
IN THIS INDIAN RE
ARE 24000 ISLANDS
64 CROWNED KINGS

ND OF DARKNESS
HERE PEOPLE GO UPON SKIS OF POLISHED BONE.
HERE LIVE THE CHIN-CHIN WHOSE BLOOD MAKES A SCARLET DYE.
CAMBALECH
HERE LIVES THE GREAT KHAN.
HERE MEN FISH WITH BIRDS.
IBET
THE CAPITOL IS
VED, AND MAN OR
MAY NOT BE KILLED
DES THEIR POPE
MANZI
ZAYTON
CENSCALAN
(CANTON)
HERE THEY WORSHIP IDOLS.
ZAMPA
HERE THE FISH COME OUT EVERY YEAR AND THROW THEMSELVES ON THE SHORE
LAMBRI
RE YOU NO
NGER SEE THE
AR STAR.
HERE THE PEOPLE HOLD LAND AND HOUSES IN COMMON
JA VA
HERE GROW CAMPHOR AND NUTMEGS. THE KINGS PALACE HAS ALTERNATE STEPS OF GOLD & SILVER.

cient to keep the people of Gog and Magog in their Caspian prison. For there was still another story to the effect that they were carefully watched by a strange jailer. This was none other than the Queen of the Amazons, who held dominion round about and all whose warriors were women! We can no longer be certain, after so many centuries, how such a fantastic tale grew up. But ancient historians tell us that some of the tribes that carried on incessant war over the plains of Arabia did have the custom of taking their women with them into battle, not so much because they wished them to fight as because the men themselves fought better with the women along. When the Tartar hordes spread over the plains around the Caspian, with men and women always together in their camps, it may well have seemed that here was another race of women warriors. So it was natural for the writers of the Middle Ages to give to these tribes the ancient name of "Amazons" that had been used before for women who fought battles. More than two centuries after Marco and the others passed along the borders of the Caucasus the old legend of a race of women warriors was still alive. For when the explorer Orellana went down by water from the Andes to the sea, in the territory that is now Brazil, he was fought by women as well as by men and so gave the name of "Amazon" to the river along which these people lived.

One other remarkable fact about the Caspian—this one, like the oil wells of Baku, really a fact, and not a fantastic legend—was noticed by those whose travels led that way. It was this: that the travelers found European ships navigating that distant inland sea. The ships were brought overland in parts, put together, and sailed everywhere, from Persia in the south to Russia in the north. The navigators and merchants who were bold enough and ingenious enough to set up this surprising mercantile marine were none other than the elder compatriots of Christopher Columbus, of Genoa—the same old-time enemies of Venice who were shortly to take Marco Polo himself prisoner and in whose city he was to dictate the book

that we are following in these pages. Perhaps Marco was none too pleased to be forced to admit such great courage and enterprise in his enemies, for all he says about it is this: "Lately the Genoese merchants have begun to sail this sea, carrying ships overland and launching them in it."

The Dead City of Famagosta

CHAPTER XVI

OF THE LANDS BETWEEN THE BLACK SEA AND THE RED

When men came down out of the mountains of the Caucasus their way to Europe divided. They might go by water or by the shoreline of the Black Sea to Constantinople, or they might turn southward through the lands we now call Armenia, Kurdistan and Syria, taking ship at last in the ports of Layas or Acre on the Mediterranean. We shall take the road that led into Syria because the southern shore of the Black Sea did not present much of interest to the old travelers. Syria, on the other hand, was a country that they were all curious about and that they hoped to visit at least once in a lifetime, even if they could not go into the distant Orient.

The lands that were described in the last chapter were given the names of Alania (which was the northernmost), Georgiana (covering the territory around the modern Tiflis) and Greater Armenia (in which the Ark rested on the summit of Mount

Ararat). Whether the travelers were returning to Europe by the northern or by the southern route their way led through the city of Erzerum. They gave it the names of Artyroun, Arziron, and others besides. But, however it is spelled, the word means "The Region of the West." Just as "Rum" is still the Turkish name for Constantinople, because it was the city of the Christians from Rome, so in "Erze-rum" also we find the Roman city-name that was given by the people in the Turkish lands to Christians, or Westerners.

This Artyroun, Arziron or Erzerum was once a very great city, the travelers were told. But it had suffered in the wars that had raged over the country and, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, was a sadly wasted place. Yet it was a very remarkable one, for all that, since it was commonly believed that it stood on higher land than any other city in the world. For this reason, it was said, all who could do so would go away from Erzerum in the winter to escape the terrible cold. If that was true the custom there has changed since, for now Erzerum is inhabited in winter. But it is true enough that the climate there is exceedingly cold and that the people have a hard time keeping paths open through the deep snow in winter.

Coming down out of the great cold of Erzerum the road led west by north to the port of Trebizond, on the Black Sea. And here, at last, the travelers found themselves once more in Christian territory. For from the beginning of the thirteenth century Trebizond had been the capital of a tiny state that was ruled over by the family of the Comneni who had once reigned in "Rum"—the Rome of the East, or Constantinople. A certain young prince, only just of age, had been forced to flee from the city of his ancestors. He evidently decided that if he could not reign in one place he would do so in another. Collecting a little army, then, he stormed Trebizond and made it the capital of a new state, where he and his descendants ruled for more than two centuries and a

half, when the Christian city fell before the invading Mohammedans.

It was a very ancient city. It had in fact received its name from the Greeks, who called it "Trapezus," or "Table," because it was built on a flat promontory jutting out into the Black Sea. There were valleys on each side of it, steep and narrow, and to the very edge of these, and also along the side facing the sea, strong fortifications had been built. Crowning all, on the inner or landward side, rose a citadel so massively built that it was considered impregnable. It might have proved to be so when the Mohammedans laid siege to Trebizond in 1461; but the reigning king in those days seems to have been a coward, for he surrendered almost without a blow struck.

All the travelers say that Trebizond was an important place. And well they might, for in those days it was the principal port between Tabriz and the Orient and Constantinople and Europe. The camel trains of the Persian merchants used to file in and out of the city in great numbers, and have continued to do so down to our own times. And in the harbor were ships of every European country around the Mediterranean. The majority of these were from Genoa, which carried on most of the trading with Europe. At one time the kings of Trebizond tried to change that condition of things, finding the Genoese merchants and captains a bit unreasonable in wanting to have all this trade to themselves. For the Comneni were a proud race and impatient of interference by outsiders. They had their way, too, in most things; and although they sometimes thought it wisest to pay tribute to Tartars or Mohammedans it is recorded that they ruled, while they ruled, in their own right and as they pleased. Their court was one of the most magnificent to be found anywhere, with noble palaces, elaborate ceremonial, and luxury of every sort. The Comneni were famed as a very handsome race, in addition to all this, and the hands of their princesses were sought after by rulers of Asia and Europe alike. Thus, although the kingdom was but a

small one, it was important in the history of the times, not only because of the great commerce that flowed through it but also because the Comneni were determined, intelligent and diplomatic.

The old books have much to say of the city itself. Not only did men marvel at the massive walls and citadel but also at the beauty of the houses and palaces. High towers rose everywhere from groves of olive and other trees, and there were noble monasteries there, too. One of the most remarkable of these was not in the city itself, but within a few hours' journey. It was built high up in a great cavern that had been formed in a cliff and was reached by steep winding paths and stairs of stone and of wood. In this cavern the buildings of the monastery were erected, over a sheer drop of a thousand feet, and four thousand feet, in all, above the sea. It is said that the monastery has looked out from this eyrie for fifteen centuries and more.

Friar Odoric was in Trebizond. But he was in a queer mood when he wrote down his account or the notes from which it was to be written. For he lets all these wonders pass over his head and tells us almost nothing about Trebizond, except the following tale; and it is not about the city so much as the region:

"In this place I saw a thing that pleased me a great deal. There I saw a man who was leading about with him more than three thousand partridges. The man walked on the ground; the partridges followed him about, flying in the air. I saw these partridges near a place called Zanega; and that is three days out of Trebizond. These partridges were so trained that when the man wished to rest and to sleep they would flock about him like chicks around a hen. And when the man went forward the partridges would follow him, flying in the air. And so this man led them into Trebizond and to the palace of the Emperor. And the Emperor would take as many of them as he liked. And then the man took back the rest of them to the place whence they came." Apparently

Friar Odoric was in holiday humor while he was in the kingdom of Trebizond and thought more of amusing himself with partridges than of describing walls and palaces. But that was a good point for Trebizond, after all, for it seems to have been a thoroughly delightful place and just the one to make the good friar care-free for the time being.

The city is hemmed in by high mountains and the only good road out of it was the one leading back toward Erzerum. But having skirted the mountain range the travelers might turn southward, for there was a good caravan way in that direction and there was much movement over it by camel trains carrying goods to Syria or up to Erzerum or Tabriz.

In the days of which we are speaking this road led into the kingdom of Lesser Armenia, which was Christian, like that of Trebizond. Like Trebizond, too, it did not keep its independence very long—three centuries in all—but fell under the domination of the sultans of Egypt. While it was independent, however, its rulers fought off Tartars and Mohammedans alike and remained firm friends with the crusaders from Europe. One of them, King Hayton I, was in alliance with the Tartars, but this was only to make common cause against the Mohammedans and did not destroy the good relations between Lesser Armenia and the crusaders. One of his predecessors on the throne had received his crown from the hands of the Archbishop of Mainz and had married a princess of the great crusading family of the Lusignan, who had become princes of the Levant then, and held their court in the island of Cyprus. A few years after our travelers had passed through Lesser Armenia one of those very Lusignan princes became king of the country. But he was a domineering person who could not understand—or did not care to—how the Armenians looked at things; and so there was misunderstanding enough to wreck the little nation, which then fell under Egyptian rule, and remained so until at last it was given over to Turkey in the nineteenth century.

The interior of the country was rugged and inhospitable

and had only a few towns, none of them particularly interesting. But down near the coast, or upon it, were the capital, Sis, and the shipping town of Layas, or Ayas, as it is sometimes called to-day. These towns were near the Syrian borderland, and it was in this region that the Lesser Armenians came mostly in contact with Europe through the crusaders. And here, too, we find the influence of that strange family of the Lusignan in a legend that was current there.

Lady Melior

This legend told of the Castle of the Sparrowhawk and of the Lady Melior who was sister of the mythical serpent-princess Melusine of Lusignan. The story of Melusine—and a very weird and touching story it is—may be found in a book that was written about her long ago. That of Lady Melior is told in the following words by Jean d'Outremeuse:

"And in that country is an old castle whose walls are nearly

covered with ivy; and it stands upon a rock. It is called the Castle of the Sparrowhawk and is beyond the city of Layas. . . . And there men find a sparrowhawk upon a perch right fair and well made and a beautiful Lady of Fairyland that keepeth it. And whoso will wake by that sparrowhawk seven days and seven nights—or, as some men say, three days and three nights—without any company or any sleep, shall have his wish. For that fairy Lady will grant him, when he hath done, the first wish for any earthly thing that he shall wish; and that hath been proved ofttimes. . . .

"The son of a poor man waked by that hawk and wished that he might succeed and prosper in his dealings. And that the Lady granted him; and he became the richest and most famous merchant that might be on sea or land. . . .

"Also a Knight of the Temple woke there and wished for a purse evermore full of gold; and the Lady granted it him. But she told him that he had asked for the destruction of the Order of the Temple because of the self-confidence that purse would give them and the great pride they would come to have. And so it was." In fact, the great and wealthy Order of the Knights of the Temple did come to a tragic end, with the execution of many of its chief members by command of the King of France, their debtor, in the year 1312. That was the very time when several of our travelers were still in Asia. But it was years before Jean d'Outremeuse wrote "The Travels of Sir John Mandeville," and so it was not very hard for him to put a truthful prophecy into the mouth of the fairy Lady Melior. But it describes perfectly well the reason why the Order of the Temple was suppressed. This order had become so wealthy that it had lands and castles scattered over all Europe and even held some of the crown jewels of England and France in pawn for great loans that it had made to the rulers of those countries. When the King of France realized that he could hardly hope to pay his debt to the Templars he had them accused of all sorts of crimes,

tried them in court and had as many as he could take executed —it is thought, unjustly, and merely because he wished to escape paying his debts.

All this might be a little beside the point in a description of early fourteenth century travel in the Levant were it not that the soothsaying was done by a fairy Lady who was supposed to be a princess of the house of Lusignan. In France the legendary sister of Lady Melior, called Melusine, was the heroine of an even more fantastic tale; yet Melusine's real existence was no doubt believed in far and wide. All this means that the Kings of Jerusalem who, in the days of our travelers, still reigned under that title in a splendid and luxurious court in the city of Famagosta on the island of Cyprus had a way of throwing a glamorous cloud over their history. The western race of the Lusignan and the Byzantine Comneni both made their mark in the countries of the Near East. But the Comneni are remembered as an energetic and practical family, while the Lusignan had a way of somehow causing people to weave fairy tales about them. And it is interesting to see how this was just as true in the land of Lesser Armenia as in France.

The way down into Syria did not lead through the capital of Lesser Armenia; that was the city of Sis, yet it is not much talked about in the stories of travel and seems not to have been very interesting. But the road did lead to Layas, the first port after Trebizond whence passage by ship to Europe might be taken. It was a very ancient city but with mere traces of the buildings that had stood there in the distant past. Yet it was a busy place, with much shipping, and it must have played an important part in the stirring military operations of the crusaders and have served as the principal link between the Christians of Europe and those of Lesser Armenia. An Italian merchant who wrote a guide to the trade routes of Asia in the fourteenth century mentions Layas and how to get to it by sea and out of it again by the caravan route going up to Erzerum or Tabriz.

To-day every trace of its old importance is gone; it is a dead city, sleeping beside a harbor where no great ships put in any more and where the ghosts of the crusaders must wander very sadly under the walls of its great castle. Indeed the castle is all that is left of Layas and there is hardly a sign of any other building. Yet Layas is not quite dead. Those who have gone there say that if you take heart and enter the castle gates you will find within the walls a dozen or twenty tiny huts inhabited by people who live as they can from the sea and the land. Life flows by along other channels now.

Opposite Layas is another dead city. It is Famagosta, the old capital of the Lusignan Kings of Jerusalem, on the island of Cyprus. For it was to that place that they fled with their empty but sounding title when, in 1291, the Saracens stormed and took their last stronghold in Palestine, the city and castle of Acre. But although the Lusignan title of Kings of Jerusalem was but an empty one, still they were a rich and powerful family and they knew how to make of Famagosta—which was then but the suburb of a far more ancient city—a great center of trade and a brilliant capital. Ambassadors of all nations came and took up their abode under the protection of the Lusignan. Huge warehouses and wharves were built, money-changers and bankers established themselves there. A great city grew up suddenly, almost as if by magic—and that reminds us again of the old Lusignan trick of doing the extraordinary thing at all times.

Fortifications, castles, palaces, wharves, storehouses, churches—even a great Gothic cathedral—rose on the shore of the blue sea amid groves of date palms and the white ruins of an ancient city that was called Salamis, after the Greek one near which the defeat of the Persian navy took place. Shakespeare had heard stories of the busy, many-colored life of this half-Levantine and half-French city; and in his *Othello* we may catch an echo of the animation of the past. Some fifteen years ago a traveler in that region came upon Famagosta, its high towers, palaces, castles and churches still

rising proudly out of the greenery of the palm groves. He came ashore and walked through the great landward gate, marveling at the clear-cut outlines of the Gothic spires against the sky of the Levant. No sooner was he inside the gate than he knew that he was in a dead city. The buildings still stood, like the Castle of Layas, as they had stood in the times of our travelers. Yet many of them were falling away, shaken by siege and earthquake. People there still were, but only a handful in comparison with the teeming population of the fourteenth century. And they were not very prosperous and seemed almost to be camping among the grandiose ruins, whereas in the times of our travelers the inhabitants of Famagosta were said to be the richest people in the world.

To tell of most of the places of interest on the Syrian mainland as they were in those times would be to tell the story of the pilgrims who came from Europe to visit the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Here we are following in the path of those who went into the distant Orient, which is quite a different tale, in which the Holy Land plays but a small part. Not that the story of the pilgrims to Jerusalem is uninteresting. It is fascinating, on the contrary; but the interest of it is the interest of devout people in spots made sacred by the mention of them in the Bible. The pilgrims also recounted miracles that they had seen or heard reports of, and described the sacred spots where lamps were kept burning by Christian monks before the shrines of saints.

But for those who made the great adventure into Tartary, Cathay, Manzi, the Eastern Isles, Ceylon, India, Persia and Armenia—for those bold rovers the Holy Land was a region of grateful calm and religious peace, it is true, but only an incident in the story of their wanderings.

Going down into this region—which, of course, was mainly that part of the Syrian coast that lay near Jerusalem—they passed Aleppo and Antioch. The first of these lay left, or eastward, while the second was near the sea. Both were ancient cities. Aleppo was the older of the two, for it goes

back to Babylonian times. Antioch was new in comparison, being but a thousand and six hundred years old, or thereabouts, when our travelers passed that way. Both cities were under the rule of the "Slaves," or Egyptian Mamelukes—Tartars of the Turkish branch who had served in Egypt and who had made themselves masters there as well as in such other places as they could conquer, Antioch and Aleppo among them.

Of Aleppo there is not much to be said, except that it was a great center of caravan routes, and consequently of trade, in the Near East. It had also played a part in the military operations of the crusaders.

But Antioch had, for almost two hundred years, been under the rule of the Christian, Prince Bohemund of Tarentum, when it was taken by the Egyptians in 1268. Antioch was a planned city, like Bagdad or like Taidu of Cambaluc and others in China. But its model had been Alexandria, and so the streets there ran at right angles, like those of many American cities. Shortly after 300 B.C., when it was already old, it was famed throughout the Greek world for its beauty and for the pleasant life that might be lived there. Especially, there was a great park a few miles from the walls where were temples and statues and where clear streams wound in and out among the trees. It was named in honor of Daphne, the nymph who prayed that she might be changed into a laurel. In the ancient days the city was full of great palaces and other buildings—among them a public library—and the people met and walked in broad streets lined with colonnades. It was a city of pleasure and magnificence and was called "The Golden" for its beauty. Almost alone of all the cities of that time its streets were lighted at night so that the people might go about without any more danger than by day.

But this magnificence had passed long before our travelers reached Antioch. Wars had raged to and fro all over that country; and even worse enemies than war—terrific earthquakes—had brought the ancient city to the ground. In the fourteenth century, then, there was not much to attract trav-

elers in Antioch except the memory that it had once been the capital of a Christian kingdom of the Levant.

Farther to the south lay Damascus, inland, and, on the sea, Jaffa, Tyre, Sidon and Acre, the last stronghold of the Christian kings of Jerusalem. Damascus, men said, was the oldest of all the cities of the world; some would have it that Adam was created by God in the green plain of fields, groves and orchards that stretches round about it. But Damascus was a city that had fallen under the dominion of Egyptians, Tartars and Arabs and had little to call Christians to it unless they were merchants with goods; for Damascus was always a great center of trade. Many a Christian legend, too, was interwoven with the history of Tyre. But all the glad memories and hopes that had flourished in the days when men from Europe were seeking to gain the Holy Land for their faith were clouded over, now, by the defeat of the crusaders. And that took place outside the walls of Acre in that fateful year of 1291, when the Lusignan and their followers had fled to Famagosta to build themselves a new capital there. For two hundred years and more Acre was still a strong city and many ships anchored in its port; but it was a city that no longer boded any good to Christians. It was taken by the Turks at last, early in the sixteenth century, and then dwindled away, like Layas, to a mere village.

Jerusalem remained, as it was in the days of the Christian lordship of the crusaders—and long before—the great goal of the thoughts of all devout Christians. It was the earthly image of Paradise, the Celestial City; and if men could not see Paradise with their mortal eyes, at least, they thought, they might see Jerusalem. And many did, as they had done before and have continued to do since.

"Also ye have heard me say," writes Jean d'Outremeuse, "that Jerusalem is in the center of the world. And that men may prove and show there by a spear driven straight into the earth at the hour of midday when it is the time of the equinox. For that spear throws no shadow on any side." Jean d'Outre-

meuse, when he wrote that, was still carrying out his argument about the roundness of the world. But it is as if he had chosen a happy symbol to show in what way Christians regarded the City of the Holy Sepulchre.

We must leave the description of Jerusalem to the pilgrims. As for our travelers into the Orient, they are already boarding ship at Acre or at Jaffa. The ship raises anchor, to the blaring of marine trumpets and the flaunting of pennants, the sails fill, and the travelers are back upon their homeward way at last. In a few days, or in a few weeks, according to the hazards of their voyage, they will see the beetling walls and streets of Genoa or glide to harbor beneath the long shadow of the Campanile in the Square of Saint Mark, in Venice.

The Long Shadow of the Campanile

AUTHORS' NOTE

For those who wish to read the stories of the travelers themselves there are editions in English which are to be found in any good-sized library. The best of these, with most interesting notes explaining the meaning of what the travelers say, are given below:

1—The Book of Ser Marco Polo, the Venetian, Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East, translated and edited with notes by Colonel Sir Henry Yule—Third edition revised by Henri Cordier—2 vols. London, Murray, 1903.

2—The Journey of William of Rubruck to the Eastern Parts of the World, 1253-55, as Narrated by Himself, with Two Accounts of the Earlier Journey of Pian de Carpine, translated from the Latin and edited by William Woodville Rockhill. London, Hakluyt Society, 1900.

3—The Travels of Sir John Mandeville, the version of the Cotton manuscript in modern spelling, with three narratives, in illustration of it, from Hakluyt's "Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries." London and New York, Macmillan, 1900. This book contains, besides Mandeville, Plano Carpini, Odoric, and an incomplete text of Rubruquis. It has no notes, and is, therefore, less interesting than the following work:

4—Mandeville's Travels, translated from the French of Jean d'Outremeuse, Edited from MS. Cotton Titus C.XVI in the British Museum, by P. Hamelius, London, Early English Text Society, 1919-23, 2 vols. in one. This text is in Middle English and is, therefore, difficult to read. It is the same version, however, as the preceding modernized one, and the notes are interesting.

5—The Wonders of the East by Friar Jordanus, translated from Latin by Colonel Henry Yule, London, Hakluyt Society, 1863.

6—Cathay and the Way Thither, translated and edited by Colonel Sir Henry Yule. New Edition revised by Henri Cordier. 4 vols. London, Hakluyt Society—1913-16. This work contains, besides a

remarkable introductory volume by the editors, the accounts of Odoric, Ibn Batuta, and various other travelers of that time.

The authors of the present volume have found a large part of their material in the above works, and in several citations from the writings of the travelers, they have used the translations of the editors. Usually, however, they have not cited these editions verbally but have made their own version.

CORRECTIONS

On the map of Mandeville's Travels: Facing page 166.

The dog-headed folk are not on the mainland, but on one of the Andaman islands.

The rats as big as dogs were somewhere near Bombay.

The tomb of St. Thomas was on the southwest coast of India.

The Perilous Vale was not in northern China but over near the Caspian Sea.

On the map of the other journeys: Facing page 234.

Cambalech should be Cambaluc.

Near the stiff-legged people, should be the city of Karakorum.

Erserum should be Erzerum.

The junk in the Indian Ocean should be an Arabian stitched ship pointing towards Hormuz.

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